

PLUCK AND LUCK

STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

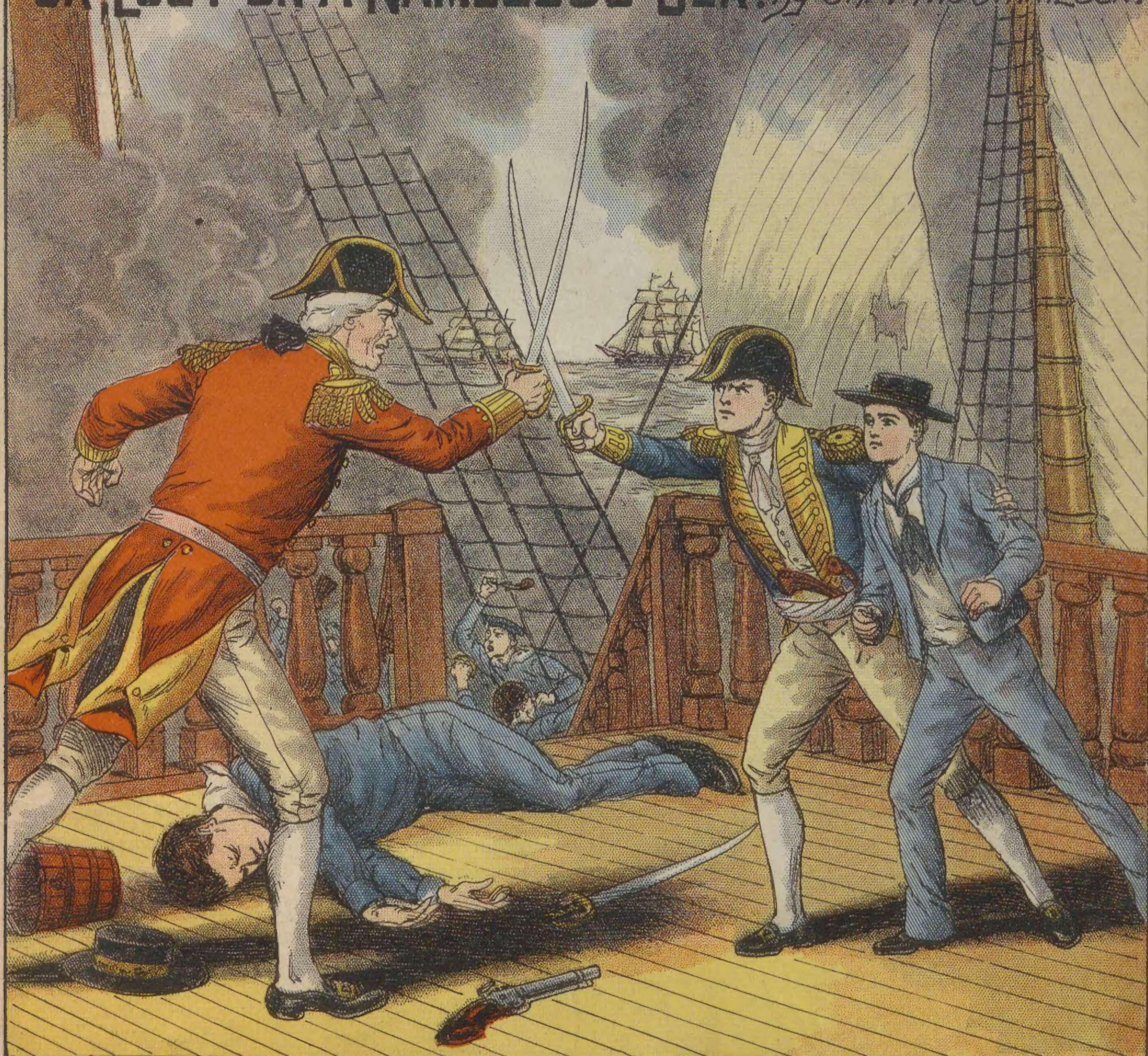
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No. 546.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 18, 1908.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BOY PRIVATEER CAPTAIN; OR LOST ON A NAMELESS SEA. *By CAPT THOS H WILSON.*



Leon suddenly dashed forward, one arm about the boy, carrying him on, and the giant's sword was sent flying from his hand, and in another instant Leon's sword passed through his hip. The Englishman fell to the deck heavily.

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The Boy Privateer Captain

—OR—

Lost On a Nameless Sea

BY CAPTAIN THOS. H. WILSON.

CHAPTER I.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE AND A DARING MOVE.

The grand ball given by the governor of the island of Jamaica, in his official residence at Kingston to the citizens of the town, the captains and officers of the vessels then at anchor in the harbor, and to the commandant and officers of the garrison, their wives and families, was in progress, and a scene of magnificence was presented which is seldom equaled.

The spacious rooms of the old mansion were brilliantly lighted, the stairway and passages were bowers of roses and palms, soft music floated upon the air from the garden where several military bands were stationed in concealed nooks, while at one end of the great ball-room a large orchestra played for the especial accommodation of the dancers.

In the gardens were hung scores of Chinese lanterns, large and small, while the fountains played and a choir of choice song-birds, in gilded cages, added their music to the swelling harmony, the whole scene vying in splendor and in romance the far-famed entertainments of the nabob rulers of the East.

The governor was celebrated for the elegance of his receptions, but on this occasion he appeared to have outdone all his former efforts, and the senses were at once charmed and bewildered by the many brilliant effects produced for their benefit.

Officers of the army and navy, in resplendent uniforms, magnificently dressed women, in the most radiant of toilets, decked out with sparkling jewels and the rarest of gems, moved in groups through the apartments, mingling with citizens in holiday attire, more soberly dressed, but of no less importance, while bustling, black servants, in livery, flew here and there, announcing new arrivals, attending to the wants of the throng, or delivering orders to one another in whispers, the whole scene being one grand, pulsating mass of light, life and motion.

The festivities were at their height when a young man in the dress usually worn at court in those days, the period being the year 1812, passed carelessly through an arched entrance hung with roses into a small conservatory through which one might reach the garden unnoticed.

There was one small hanging lamp in the place and this

light, reflected by a tiny fountain in the center, was all that it afforded.

The young man, who seemed to be scarcely twenty, was attired in a full-buttoned black silk coat and knee breeches, a long waistcoat of white silk, black silk hose and low pumps with diamond buckles, and wore a heavy fall of lace at his throat and wristbands, his own hair being brushed off his forehead and tied behind by a great black bow.

His appearance, while like that of many others present, was nevertheless distinguished, and one would have said at a glance that he was a person of unusual abilities, one to be cherished as a friend and dreaded as a foe.

All that any one knew of him was that he was the son of a rich American merchant and a young man of fashion seeing the world and its pleasures, his presence in Kingston at that time being accounted for in no other way than that his travels chanced to bring him there and nothing else.

At this time rumors were rife of a war with the United States, but nothing definite had yet been heard, and upon the occasion of the governor's ball nothing seemed farther from the thoughts of men in military, naval and civic circles.

The young man passed through the little conservatory, pausing just before he reached the door leading to the garden, to look back for an instant and then to listen.

"I ought to hear to-night," he said, softly. "It will be an opportunity I may never have again if I do not. In case anything serious has happened by this time, Hal should have sailed long ago. Perhaps he would not sail until he had positive information, and of course he could not know what plans I had formed. I wonder if Derrick has yet returned?"

He opened the door and stepped out into the garden, and as he did so he heard a low whistle from behind a marble statue of Flora, standing above a mass of palms.

He returned the signal, and a man in a cloak stepped out and said:

"Did you want anything, sir?"

"Where is Derrick?"

"Gone to the harbor. A vessel has been reported as in the offing."

"What did he think it was?"

"The Vigilant."

"Good. He has his orders to bring Hal to this place at once?"

"Yes, sir."

"And if his news is as I suspect it will be, are our men posted?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the men on the Sprite?"

"Half of 'em are impressed American seamen, and are with us."

"There are others in port?"

"Yes, enough to man a frigate."

"And ready to act?"

"Yes, at a moment's notice."

"Good. Remain here and give the signal as soon as Derrick returns."

"Ay, ay, sir!" and the man returned to his hiding place.

As the young man re-entered the conservatory he saw the figure of a beautiful young girl standing in the further entrance, her form thrown into full relief by the light behind.

He advanced as far as the fountain and whispered:

"Hist! Isabel!"

"Leon!" she answered, as she came swiftly forward.

"What news?" asked the young man as he held the girl in his arms.

"The governor wishes to announce my engagement to Captain Sir Alexander Havens immediately after supper."

"But you are an American, and Sir Alexander is in his majesty's service."

"I am the governor's ward, and he has the right to dispose of my hand as he wishes."

"But you do not wish to marry this coxcomb?"

"Leon!"

"I knew it; but something must be done at once. Listen. I know that we are on the eve of a war with England—it may have been already declared. I expect a commission and letters of marque at any moment, but the least delay may thwart all my plans."

"What can be done, Leon?" asked the girl. "You know that my heart is yours, that I am a true American, and that I am ready to follow you to the end of the world."

"Yes, yes, I know all that, dearest, and I may put your vows to the test this very night. I may have to fly or I may go in triumph, but if you promise to be true, it can matter little what happens."

At that moment a young girl came hastily into the darkened conservatory, looked hurriedly around, and said anxiously:

"She is not here, and yet—oh, what is to be done? The governor evidently suspects that——"

"What is it, May?" asked Isabel, coming forward.

"Ah, you are here?" cried the other. "Your guardian has sent for you. He says that you have been altogether too free with this American, and that he means to have your engagement announced at once. He suspects Leon to be a spy of the United States, and I heard him say as much to Sir Alexander."

"Then there is no time to be lost!" hissed Leon. "Ha! what is that? The signal, as I live!"

A sound as of a pebble being thrown against the glass was heard, and Leon hurried to the little door and threw it open, a young fellow of about his own age and size hurriedly entering.

"War has been declared!" he said eagerly. "I got away from the vessel in a sailboat brought out by Derrick."

"And then?"

"We took horses the instant we were on shore and rode like the wind."

"Good; and the news?"

"Cannot reach here under two hours at least."

"And my commission?" asked Leon, eagerly.

"I forwarded your application to Congress, and the very mo-

ment that war was declared I received the commission and the letters of marque which authorize you to carry on war privately against Great Britain, either on the high seas or in any but a neutral port."

"Just in time!" said Leon. "Isabel, my love, I ask you to follow me and share the fortunes of a privateer. Will you do it?"

"I will!" answered the brave girl. "But how shall you escape? You have no vessel, and the instant the news of war is known you will be detained."

"Not so," cried the young man. "I have conceived a bold plan, and now for its execution."

"What do you mean to do?"

"Seize one of the vessels now in the harbor, take command and wage war against the enemy."

"But that is piracy."

"No, for I am now a privateer captain, with full authority from the President and Congress of the United States."

At that moment the door was thrown open, and in rushed a grizzled seaman.

"There's not a moment to lose, captain, if we intend to make the Sprite ours!" he said, hastily. "The news will be abroad in an hour."

"To the shore!" hissed Leon. "Hal, my old friend, you shall be my lieutenant. One bold dash and the Sprite is ours."

"And hurrah for the boy privateer!" muttered Hal, as they all hurriedly left the palace.

Ten minutes later the governor's ward was missing, and the greatest consternation reigned.

CHAPTER II.

THE BOY PRIVATEER BEGINS HIS CRUISE.

The time for the young privateer's bold stroke had been well timed.

The Sprite lay at a distance from the other vessels in the harbor, and her commander and officers were all at the governor's ball.

Only a small force had been left on board, and two-thirds of these were men who had been impressed from American merchant ships and forced to serve on board a British war vessel.

Leon, who was an able navigator and a born commander, although scarcely more than a boy, had long anticipated trouble with England, and had prepared himself for an emergency.

He had applied for letters of marque, and had then gone to Jamaica, on an apparently peaceful mission, but actually to examine the strength of the enemy, and to determine where best he might strike when once war had been declared.

Isabel Vernon, Leon's sweetheart, although born in America and entirely in sympathy with the federal government, had been placed under the guardianship of Sir Neville Montjoy, afterward British representative at Kingston, to which place she had been sent after the death of her father.

Thither Leon had followed, and had renewed his vows, Isabel declaring that she would be faithful to him whatever happened.

The Sprite, commanded by Sir Alexander Havens, the very man whom Isabel was to be forced to marry by her obstinate guardian, was a topsail schooner of about two hundred tons, large enough to accommodate a crew of sixty men and carrying fifteen guns, being well provided besides with small arms for all hands and stores sufficient for a considerable cruise.

When Leon began to look around for a suitable vessel his eye soon lighted upon the Sprite, and it was not long before

he knew all about her and just what chances there were of seizing her in case he determined to take that step.

Many of her men had been taken from American merchantmen, and with some of these, those whom he could trust, he soon became acquainted.

He did not know how long it would be before war would be declared, but he had instructed his closest friend, Hal Hurry, to repair with all speed to Jamaica as soon as possible after the matter was determined upon, a certain English vessel then at Havana, being the one chosen for him to go to Kingston upon in case he could not find one nearer home.

Hal easily passed for an Englishman, and was not suspected all the time he was on board, everyone supposing him to be a young colonist going to look over his plantations in Jamaica.

In the meantime Leon had assured himself of a large following, had kept his lieutenants well informed of what they were to do, and had made every arrangement to seize the Sprite upon the evening of the grand ball given by the governor, the probable absence of nearly all the crew from the schooner upon that occasion being just such an opportunity as he most desired.

The vessel lay idly at anchor in the harbor, the night was dark, there was little wind, and the waves lapped gently the sides of the Sprite as she softly rocked to and fro.

Her side lights were up, but no others could be seen, unless now and then when one of the watch struck a match and pulled at his pipe, the sailor's solace in all climes.

There was but a small guard left on board, for many of the men had been given liberty, and the captain and all his officers were at the governor's ball, the vessel being left to take care of herself.

One big fellow with a gray beard and tangled hair, the oldest man on board, sat on an overturned deck bucket up forward, and, as he puffed slowly at his pipe, would now and then cast his eyes over the rail toward the town and emit a low grunt.

"Vot for you grunt, bos'n, h'm?" asked a young sailor, pausing in his walk up and down the deck.

"'Cos my toes ache, that's why, ye Dptchman," answered the other.

"Ha! dat's funny, Bill. Is he your left toe or your right toe vat ache?"

"My right one, o' course, you swab, and that's why I grunt."

"Ha! your left toe didn't ache, and yer right toe vas vood. Ho, ho! dat's vunny, too."

"Never mind if it is, you lubber, and don't make so much noise," said the other, rising and stumping up and down in the manner peculiar to a man with a wooden leg.

"You hear anything, h'm?" whispered the younger man, coming close.

"Yes, but don't stop here, keep on walking, and give a look down the hatch and see if our men are awake."

"Yah, I do dat," said the other, with a soft chuckle.

Ten minutes later a man came on deck, walked to the rail, looked out upon the darkness, and muttered:

"Hallo! some o' the lads must be coming. Can't be that the ball is broke up; must be the blue jackets. Hallo, mates, turn up and——"

"Stow that, you lubber!" hissed the wooden-legged man, springing suddenly to the other's side and felling him with a blow of his fist.

The outcry had been heard, however, and five or six seamen came hurrying on deck.

At that moment there came a low whistle from the water's edge.

"Ahoy!" answered Bill. "Joe, my lad, stir up the boys. The time has come for action!"

"Yankee Doodle forever!" cried the other, running to the companionway leading to the gun-deck.

Up came a score of men, and at the same moment two score more swarmed over the rail at several points.

"What does this mean?" demanded one of the warrant officers of the boatswain on watch as he hurriedly ran forward.

"It means that the Yankees have declared war against John Bull!" cried Bill Capstan, the one-legged boatswain, "and this is the first capture."

"Hurrah for Captain Leon, our boy commander!" shouted a score of voices.

Of those on board the majority were Americans, and the intruders were all such, and the consequence was that after a short struggle the Sprite was in the hands of Captain Leon.

"Stand by to take on passengers," cried the voice of Hal Hurry, after a short interval, "and then to hoist the anchor and get away."

The prisoners were sent below, the men were quickly divided into two working crews by Bill Capstan and Joe Spiegel, the young Hollander, and the work of getting the vessel under way was soon rapidly progressing.

Presently two closely veiled ladies came up the swinging companion way let down over the side and made their way to the cabin, escorted by Hal, who saluted as they disappeared, and then returned to Leon's side.

"I could not leave you, Leon," he said, "and May could not leave Isabel. We'll have a double wedding on board as soon as we can ship a parson."

"Ay, ay, my lad," answered Leon, with a light laugh. "But this is no time for jesting, Hal. We have not yet done all that I undertook to do this night. Give orders to get away from the harbor as soon as possible."

The work was done quietly and efficiently, and the Sprite had up her anchor, put on sail, and was on her way to sea before anyone on the other vessels in the harbor suspected that anything was going wrong.

"We have other work yet to do," said Leon. "I mean to cut out two or three of the enemy's vessels before I leave."

"But we can't take 'em with us," said Hal. "We haven't men enough."

"No, but we can scuttle or burn them. I wish to be well remembered in Kingston. Now, then, first to attack that nearest sloop."

On swept the little vessel, and presently the lookout on the sloop cried in a frightened voice:

"Ahoy there! Do you want to run us down? Schooner ahoy!"

In another moment the two vessels collided, the Sprite running alongside and throwing out grappling hooks.

Out rushed an officer in uniform as Leon's men began to swarm over the rail.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, angrily. "By what authority——"

"By the authority of the United States government!" cried Leon. "Forward, lads, and scuttle her as quickly as you can."

The men of the vessel were swept aside, and the gallant tars from the Sprite, led by Hal Hurry and Derrick, hastened below, the plan of action having already been determined upon.

The officer in command was very indignant, called Leon a pirate and a robber, threatened all sorts of vengeance, and demanded that he fight a duel then and there upon the quarter-deck.

"Time presses," said the boy privateer, "or I might accommodate you. What I have done is sanctioned by the laws of nations. War has been declared against Great Britain, and I am a privateer acting under letters of marque from the United States. This is the second blow I have struck to-night, and it will not be the last."

In a few minutes the men came up from below, and Hal re-

ported that the vessel had been scuttled in a dozen places and would sink in twenty minutes.

"To your own vessel!" cried Leon. "Cast off, lively now, all hands to places. Stand by for stays. Let go!"

The Sprite swung loose from the sloop, put about and dashed away toward the open sea, while the men on the doomed vessel made hasty preparations to leave in the boats which had been spared.

On swept the Sprite, and the next vessel she met was hastily boarded and set on fire in a score of places, the crew being taken completely by surprise, as in the case of the sloop.

By this time an alarm was fired from the forts on shore, and the news quickly spread that war had been declared, that an American privateer was abroad, and that every ship in port was to be destroyed.

The daring boy captain had kept his word, and before he finally took to flight he had scuttled one vessel, fired two, and sent broadsides into two others, leaving behind him a fiery wake as he left the harbor, the stars and stripes floating from the peak, while from fifty lusty throats the cry went up:

"Hurrah for Captain Leon, the boy privateer, and three cheers for the old flag!"

CHAPTER III.

A CHALLENGE.

The day was fair, the sun shone merrily upon the dancing waves, the breeze was fresh, and the Sprite sped lightly over the ocean, her white sails glistening in the sunlight, the spray dashing in showers from her cutwater, and everything on board as trim and taut as the most exacting seaman could wish.

She had left Kingston amid the booming of cannon, the hoarse cries of the enemy, the glare of burning ships and the whistling of hurtling shot, but now a more peaceful scene was presented.

Everything was in the best order, the men wore their smartest clothes, the ports were closed, the guns under cover, all traces of the strife had been removed, and all on board seemed keeping holiday instead of being bound upon a mission of destruction.

In the fore-castle were gathered a dozen men listening to old Bill Capstan, who sat on a sea chest smoking a pipe, his wooden leg thrust out straight before him as he told a yarn of the sea.

All at once a cry from aloft sounded: "Sail ho!"

The men sprang up, and were on deck almost as soon as the man aloft had answered the hail from the deck with:

"Dead ahead, sir, and coming this way. Looks like an English frigate."

"Clear the decks!" shouted Leon, "but do not open the ports until I give the word."

Before long the approaching vessel was plainly to be seen from the deck, but it was not until half an hour later that she was seen to be making signals.

"Get the code, Hal," said Leon, quietly, "and see if you can make out what they are saying. I think I know, but I am not certain."

Hal went below and presently returned with the book and a small telescope.

"They want us to lay to and send an officer on board," said Hal, in a few moments.

"Signal her that we want to know who she is."

Derrick, a powerful, well-built man of forty, now came aft and, under Hal's directions, hoisted the signal flags.

They were displayed for a few minutes when the stranger hoisted another signal.

"They say that we are to send an officer aboard and report," said Hal, "but they do not give their own name."

"Do you know her, Derrick?" asked Leon. "You are pretty well acquainted with the ships of the English navy, I think."

"Ay," answered the seaman, "and I incline to the belief, sir, that she is the Disturber, one of the smaller ships of the West India squadron, twenty-eight guns, with a crew of a hundred."

"Nearly twice our own force," said Leon. "Signal her again, Hal, and ask if she is the Disturber."

In a few moments the signal flags were fluttering from the peak, and in a short time an answering signal was hoisted from the stranger's peak.

"They want to know if we are not the Sprite?" said Hal.

"Tell them we are," said Leon, the two vessels having rapidly neared each other.

The signals were displayed, but no answer was made from the other vessel for several minutes, when the two ships were within hail.

"Stand by to act upon a moment's notice," said Leon, quietly, and the word was passed along in the same manner.

"On board the Sprite!" came the hail from the other ship.

"Ahoy!" cried Leon from the quarter-deck.

He was enveloped in a long cloak, and wore a hat common to the captains of nearly all navies.

"Where are you from?"

"Kingston, in the island of Jamaica."

"Is Captain Sir Alexander Havens on board?"

"No."

"Who commands the Sprite?"

"I do!" and the cloak suddenly fell from Leon's shoulders, and revealed him in the full uniform of the United States navy.

"Come on board. I wish to ask you some questions."

"If you have any business with me, come on board and state it!" answered Leon, and at that moment a ball of bunting shot up to the peak, hung for an instant, and then unrolled and showed the stars and stripes.

"Show your teeth, bullies!" cried Leon, and in a second every port was thrown open and the muzzles of the guns were thrust forth. At the same time a ringing cheer was given, and as the Sprite swept past the English vessel a broadside was poured in upon her.

The British flag was quickly displayed, and the enemy answered with a flying shot from her bow chasers, that showed that she had not been entirely unprepared for such a move.

"We must fight, my lads," said Leon, "and fight well. It is not force of men, nor of guns, that makes a vessel's strength; it is the brave hearts of the men who man her. Now, then, another!"

The air was soon thick with smoke, and neither vessel could be distinguished in the confusion.

Suddenly there was a collision, under which both vessels rocked violently.

Leon had rightly judged the position of the enemy, and had borne down upon her with such precision that the beams of the two vessels grazed one another, and then came together with a shock.

In an instant the two ships were grappled together, and with a ringing cry Leon and a score of his followers leaped over the rail before any resistance could be offered, and dashed straight for the quarter-deck.

Leon was the first to reach it, and here he met the captain of the enemy's ship, sword in hand.

"Into the sea with you, pirate!" cried the Englishman, a man of giant build and the manners of a tyrant. "Traitor to your flag, yield this instant or I will cut you from head to heels."

"I am no traitor," answered Leon, calmly, putting himself

on guard. "I am an American privateer captain, and yonder vessel is my lawful prize. If you can conquer her from me, you are welcome to her. Let this contest decide."

"I accept no terms from Yankees," cried the Englishman.

"You may be compelled to do so," said Leon. "On guard!"

In an instant the daring boy had attacked his giant foe with the utmost fierceness, and the latter was compelled to fight as he had never fought before.

CHAPTER IV.

A DASHING RETREAT.

The fighting upon the main deck of the frigate ceased, all hands turning their attention to the poop where Leon and the English captain were now about to measure swords.

The Englishman was large of stature, and towered above the young American, but the latter was determined, and would not have faltered had his opponent been twice his size and weight.

The boy privateer was a splendid swordsman, and as he parried the blows aimed at him by his giant opponent all marveled at his strength of arm and the clearness of his eye, as well as the great coolness which he displayed, holding his ground as though rooted to the deck, and not giving way as much as an inch. The Englishman was evidently astonished, but, relying upon his superior strength, he now pressed forward as if to end the combat by a few swift blows.

Leon parried the first, and then, by a lightning stroke pierced his adversary's sword arm, and by a quick thrust sent the weapon flying into the air.

"Fight on, my brave lads!" he cried. "Fight on and the ship is ours!" and then, stepping back a pace as if to allow his opponent to recover his weapon, he shot a quick glance half around the horizon.

The English captain tore off his neckerchief, bound it about his arm, picked up his sword, and said:

"Now, my young pirate, this fight is to the death. Yield and I will spare your life for the courage and ability you have shown; refuse, and I will kill you like a dog."

"Come on," said Leon. "We but waste words."

The fight was renewed, Leon pressing his man hard, and causing him to be constantly on the defensive.

The Englishman fumed and frothed, and swore beneath his breath, for try as he would he could not break through his boyish opponent's guard, and was obliged continually to defend himself.

A hot fight was now going on below between the privateers and the men of the frigate, Hal leading one body of tars and Derrick another.

Suddenly, while the two leaders were fighting furiously on the quarter, a slight, boyish form was seen to hurry up the companion ladder and spring lightly to Leon's side.

"Captain," he whispered, clinging to him and yet not impeding his movements, advancing as Leon advanced, and retreating as the latter retreated, "two frigates are approaching. We must get away at once or we are lost!"

The Englishman essayed to rush in upon his opponent, seeing him about to bend over to speak to the boy, but Leon suddenly dashed forward, one arm about the boy, carrying him on, and the giant's sword was sent flying from his hand, and in another instant Leon's sword passed through his hip.

The Englishman fell to the deck heavily, and in a second Leon turned to the boy and said:

"Run, Paul, and tell Hal and Derrick to fire this ship and then retreat with all haste to our own."

In a moment the boy was gone.

Staggering to his feet, his eyes inflamed with rage, the British captain whipped out a brace of pistols and hissed:

"Now, then, my bold lad, we will see if you shall escape!"

Flash! Crash! Two swift blows like strokes of lightning, and the Englishman was disarmed.

"Pick up your sword if you desire to finish the fight," said Leon.

"Yes, and it shall end in your death," muttered the other, with a fierce imprecation. "Look. Do you see those two sails? They belong to English vessels. You shall never escape! Hurrah, my men! Fight on, aid is at hand, and soon——"

His boy opponent pressed him so hard that the words died in his throat and a terrible fear oppressed him.

Foot by foot he was forced backwards towards the taffrail, foot by foot he was driven towards the sea, the blows coming in thick and fast, and impossible to avoid except by flight.

Then, of a sudden, flames broke out in nearly a dozen places.

They ran up the masts and rigging, they poured from the ports, they ascended at the bow and broke out astern.

A booming sound came across the water, answered at once by the cannon on board the privateer.

In an instant the air was dense with smoke, and the two vessels were shut out from the sight of the approaching frigates.

Then a sharp, clear whistle of a peculiar note rang out, and in a twinkling the privateers hurried on board their own craft.

In another instant the two vessels are cut apart, and a broadside is poured in upon the English ship.

Before the smoke clears away the privateer is a hundred fathoms distant and another cloud of fire and smoke belches from her ports.

"Up with all sail and away!" cries Leon, in a ringing voice. "It is no sin to take to one's heels when opposed by an overwhelming force, and all is fair in love and war."

When the smoke lifted and the British ships reached the disabled Disturber, the privateer was half a mile away, and scudding towards the open sea, pursuit being out of the question until the crippled frigate was cared for.

The captain was badly wounded, many of his best men were killed, and his vessel was afire in a dozen places, the flames threatening before long to reach the magazine.

The united efforts of the newcomers were required to save the Disturber, and the saucy privateer escaped, her flag flying and a shout of defiance thundering out from her stern-chasers.

Away and away she sped till she was a mere speck on the horizon, and the chagrined Englishmen were forced to swallow their defeat with a bad grace.

Leon had gone to his cabin, thrown down his hat and removed his belt, when Hal hurriedly entered and said:

"There is a man on board who claims your protection. He came over from the frigate when we retreated. The men were about to fall upon him when he cried out that he was no enemy and that you would spare his life when you saw him. He says his name is Darke——"

"Darke Crenshawe on board this vessel!" interrupted Leon. "His life must be spared, but I fear he is no friend of mine. Send him to me."

"Then you do know the man?" asked Hal, in surprise.

"Yes, he is my cousin," returned Leon, quietly.

"But you never told me that you had any relatives on——"

"It is of no consequence, Hal," said Leon, with a smile.

"There is no secret about it. Tell the men that I do not wish this person harmed. On second thoughts, I do not care to see him; not now, at all events."

The young lieutenant hurried from the cabin, muttering to himself:

"His cousin on his father's side, and I thought he was the last of the name. There is some mystery here. I don't like the looks of Mr. Darke Crenshawe, and I mean to watch him."

When he reached the deck he hurried to the waist, where a knot of men had gathered, and said:

"Release that man. Captain Leon says that no harm must come to him, and that he must be set free."

The sailors fell back and a man dressed in a half uniform stepped forward and took off his hat.

His hair was long and gathered in a knot at the back of his neck, his hands were white and tapering, his limbs were shapely, and he had the look of a person of good birth, but there was still something in the glance of his eye, certain hard lines about his mouth, and a scarcely perceptible curve of the nose which Hal did not like, and which prejudiced him against the man from the start.

The latter advanced a pace, bowed and smiled, and then said:

"And my gallant young cousin—where is he? May I not see him? It was with great joy that I recognized him during the fight, and I made all haste to leave the enemy's vessel when an opportunity presented itself."

"What were you doing there if you are a true American, as you claim?" asked Hal, pointedly.

Darke Crenshawe smiled as sweetly as before, and answered:

"Your question is well put, sir, and I take pleasure in answering it. I have been abroad and knew nothing of war having been declared, but, wishing to get home as speedily as possible, embarked on board the *Disturber*, the captain of which is an old acquaintance and friend, though now, by the fortunes of war, an enemy."

"But your uniform is English."

"Ha, ha! Some concession must be made, my dear sir," laughed Crenshawe. "I could hardly wear a Continental uniform on board a British ship. I will be glad to change it at once, and if you will conduct me to my brave young cousin I shall be——"

"Captain Leon does not wish to be disturbed at present," interrupted Hal. "If you desire to make any change you will find a vacant berth in the midshipman's quarters. Hawley! Show Mr. Crenshawe below."

"As you please," said the other, still smiling. "You are doubtless right. The cabin is crowded, of course. Please give my regards to my distinguished relative, and say that I am anxiously awaiting the moment when I can present them in person."

He then bowed and went forward, Hal returning aft, musing:

"I don't like him, for all his smiles and fashionable graces. I can see villain written on every line of his face."

As Hal was about to enter the cabin, the boy Paul suddenly intercepted him and said in a low tone:

"I like not this black-browed stranger, with his white teeth and his evil smile, and it will not be amiss perhaps if I keep a watch upon him!"

"Indeed it will not, my boy," said Hal, "and there's no one to whom I would sooner entrust our captain's safety than yourself. Your eye is keen and your hand swift. Keep watch, Paul, and never relax your vigilance a moment."

"I will not," said the boy, and in another moment he was heard in the cabin singing a rollicking sea song, with an air so careless that no one would have suspected him to be the keen-eyed lad who held his captain's life and happiness more sacred than his own.

"Leon is safe with such a sentinel on watch," muttered Hal, "but I shall keep my eye on Mr. Darke Crenshawe, nevertheless. One does not take these strong dislikes without reason, and I believe the man to be a thorough scoundrel!"

CHAPTER V.

A SECRET SIGNAL.

Two or three days after the fight with the English frigate, *Leon* was cruising about in search of anything belonging to the enemy that he might seize, when the man at the lookout reported a strange vessel several miles to windward and evidently coming toward them.

"Can you make out whether she is a merchantman or a war vessel, Derrick?" asked Leon.

"She looks too trim for a merchantman, sir," said the tar, "and she hasn't the rig of a regular man-o'-war. I can't quite make her out, but maybe when she gets a bit nearer I can."

After a brief interval Derrick turned to the young captain and said:

"I now make her out to be a fighting craft, sir; but she ain't a regular man-o'-war."

"A privateer, perhaps," mused Leon. "However, we must not take chances. Hal, see that all is made ready, as quietly as possible, in case we should have to fight."

"Ay, ay," said Hal, hurrying away, while Leon sent Paul, the cabin boy, for his telescope.

As the boy was returning, Isabel hastened from the cabin and flew to Leon's side, closely followed by the polite Darke Crenshawe, who said in his smoothest tones:

"I have been endeavoring to assure the lady, my dear cousin, that there is really no danger—that the stranger is a privateer like ourselves, and fighting under the same flag——"

"You do not know if he is or not!" said Leon, shortly. "There is no necessity for alarming the lady by saying anything until I chose to acquaint her with the fact that an enemy is in sight."

"Pardon me, if I have been rash," said Darke Crenshawe, bowing low. "I assure you, my dear cousin——"

"I have nothing more to say," said Leon, taking the glass from Paul. "Isabel, you had best retire."

The courteous Darke withdrew, still smiling, and Isabel, clinging to her lover, whispered:

"I do not like that man; he terrifies me. Why, I do not know. Just now he came to me and May and said there would be a battle and we had not even known that a vessel was in sight."

"The man is too officious, but I do not think he means any harm."

"And I am sure he does," interposed the girl. "Be warned in time, dear Leon, and watch him closely, for I am sure that he——"

"Yes, yes, but I must go on the quarter-deck, and this is no place for you. I will watch him if you say so, but just now an actual danger threatens, perhaps, and——"

The young commander hastened to the quarter-deck and Isabel went into the cabin with Paul.

"I heard what you said, my lady," whispered the boy, "and I will keep watch if our captain does not. I like not this dark stranger myself, but——"

"You are a brave lad," said the girl, "and I trust you, but—hush!"

Paul turned quickly, and saw Darke Crenshawe only a few paces behind.

"Yes, my lady," he said, opening the door of Isabel's state-room. "I will see that your orders are obeyed," and then, as Isabel passed into the room, he shut the door and stood before it.

Darke Crenshawe passed on, smiling, and Paul, who thought he had divined the man's purpose, was greatly puzzled.

"He knows that I suspect him," the boy presently thought,

"but he does not want me to know that he knows it, in order to put me off my guard."

At that moment there was a cry from the masthead.

"If I ain't out of my reckoning, sir, yon fellow is no honest privateer, but a dastardly pirate."

"A pirate!" gasped Paul. "Then the fight will indeed be desperate, for our captain has sworn to drive all such from the sea!"

The boy hurried on deck in time to see the stranger, who had drawn much nearer during his absence, run a ball of bunting up to the main peak, which, when it unfurled, proved to be the hated black flag of the buccaneer.

"Ha! he shows his colors," cried Leon, "and now show him ours. Pirates are our enemies as well as the British, and worse. I have respect for an honest foe, but none for these vampires. Clear the decks for action!"

In a moment all was activity on deck, the men moving systematically, however, so that there was not the least disorder.

Every man had his duties and knew them, they all had their places and went to them, so that with all the activity there was no confusion.

The guns were unlimbered, arms and ammunition were passed out, and every man was ready to act upon an instant's warning.

All the crew were in their places, and not a man among them would fail in his duty when the crisis came.

The young ladies were taken to a place of safety, and Leon, with Hal by his side to take instructions, stood on the quarter-deck, watching the movements of the pirate.

Paul, the cabin boy, stood on the deck below, now looking this way and now that, in apparent carelessness, but in reality taking note of everything.

He had a short sword buckled on at his left side, but no one expected he would use it.

Suddenly, in the bustle of preparation, Paul saw two or three signal flags flying from the top of the foremast.

"What does that mean?" he mused, and then glancing toward the pirate vessel, he saw her suddenly come swooping down toward them, when, until then, she seemed to be acting with great caution.

The boy looked up at the flags and made a mental note of them, and then, with a sudden inspiration, sprang forward.

When he reached the foremast, the flags were no longer visible.

Darke Crenshawe was standing there, smiling, as was his wont.

"Who put up the signals, and where are they now?" asked Paul.

"What are you talking about, boy?" returned Crenshawe. "There have been no signals hoisted."

Paul said nothing, but hurried aft.

Diving into the cabin he rushed into Leon's room, and presently brought out a book of signals used by the different naval powers of the world.

Turning the pages hurriedly, he soon chanced upon a certain combination of colors, one above the other.

"Ha, here it is! The very colors that I saw—blue, red and yellow, green and white, dark blue—yes, and in the same position. What do they mean?"

His face suddenly flushed deeply, and he closed the book and hurried from the room, muttering excitedly:

"Your strength is vastly superior to ours! That's what the signal reads. Who displayed it? Crenshawe? What has he to do with pirates? I must watch him closer than ever, for if it were not he who gave that signal, then I was never more mistaken in my life."

As he reached the deck he heard the boom of cannon, and

an instant later a heavy shot flew through the rigging high above his head.

In an instant the privateer answered with a broadside, and the battle began.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIGHT ON THE PIRATE SHIP.

The pirates greatly outnumbered the privateer's crew, but the latter were a determined lot of hardy tars, accustomed to the strictest discipline, and fighting in a good cause, and there was not a man there who would not have given his life for it.

The pirate captain, evidently knowing that the enemy numbered less than his own crew, seemed determined to force the fight.

He came bearing down upon the privateer, his men uttering shrill cries, while his cannon belched fire and smoke.

By a quick movement, the privateer swung around to meet the buccaneer head and head, and the greater part of the enemy's fire flew harmlessly by.

As soon as he had drawn the fire of the pirate Leon changed his course and sent a broadside right across the pirate's decks.

Then, while his vessel still quivered from the rebound, he bore down upon the enemy under the cover of the smoke, and before the pirate realized what had happened, the two vessels came together with a shock.

"Make fast! Board! Over with you all! Hurl the miscreants into the sea!"

The very daring of the move seemed to assure its being successful.

In an instant two score of brave fellows, with Leon at their head, swarmed upon the pirates' deck at the quarter.

A moment later another party, headed by Hal, poured over the rail forward.

The boy commander met the pirate chief on his own deck, and at once engaged him in combat.

The freebooter was a fine swordsman, and outweighed Leon by forty pounds, but the boy was no novice, and had a wrist of steel.

The combat was now general, and men fell on all sides; but neither Leon nor the pirate seemed able to get the advantage, and they fought desperately for fully ten minutes, neither gaining nor losing ground.

The air was full of flame and smoke, the decks ran blood, and the din and confusion vied with the tumult of pandemonium itself.

Paul, the cabin boy, had found his way over to the deck of the pirate vessel while pursuing his self-appointed duty of watching the movements of Darke Crenshawe.

He carried a naked sword in his hand, but no one opposed him; and he acted solely upon the defensive.

Darke Crenshawe, sword in hand, was making his way toward the spot where Leon and the corsair were still desperately fighting.

Paul followed, his eyes fixed upon Crenshawe.

Suddenly the latter appeared to slip and fall from stepping in a pool of blood, his naked sword in his hand.

Leon's back was toward him, and there seemed to be nothing to prevent that keen blade from being driven straight through the young commander's body.

With a shrill cry Paul sprang forward.

His light sword flashed in the air like a ray of light.

It caught Crenshawe's blade almost at the moment that it touched the gold lace upon Leon's coat.

There was a flash, a whistling sound, and then a splash in the water.

Crenshawe fell at Leon's feet face downward, his arm outstretched upon the deck.

The boy privateer captain's life had been saved as by a miracle.

Except for the devotion of one brave lad that instant would have been his last.

Even now the danger was not all averted.

Crenshawe's hand grasped one of his ankles and he wavered.

The pirate, quick to seize the advantage, leaped forward, leaving his own front exposed.

The brave cabin boy gave one leap and threw himself between Leon and the pirate.

He received the buccaneer on the point of his light sword, and it was driven in clear to the hilt and wrenched from his hand.

The pirate fell dead, and Leon caught the half-fainting boy in his arms.

"Charge, my brave lads!" he shrieked. "The wolf is dead! Drive the whelps into the sea!"

With a shout that made the air resound, the gallant tars joined their forces and rushed with terrible and utterly irresistible force upon the buccaneers.

The latter, losing heart at the sudden death of their chief, fled in dismay.

Some plunged at once into the sea, many hurled themselves madly upon the blades of their foes, and some seemed to go mad and stared blankly at the carnage going on around them, without the power or will to stay it.

Derrick, who had recovered Paul's sword, handed it to the boy, who stood in a half-dazed state as Leon sprang forward.

"No, no, I cannot take it," he said.

"Come, lad," said the man, "that was a brave stroke you made. Nerve yourself, my hearty, and help drive these carrion crows into the sea."

"I knew not what I did. I never meant to kill him. I wished only to save our captain," murmured the boy.

Darke Crenshawe now arose to his feet, his clothes and hands wet with blood, an evil look upon his face.

"That was an unlucky fall of mine, and might have caused my dear cousin his life," he said, confusedly, suddenly seeing the boy's eyes fixed upon him.

Paul said nothing, but he bent a gaze so searching, so stern, and so filled with contempt upon the man, that the latter turned away in shame, and forgot to smile.

"Yes, I will take the sword," said the fearless youth. "No knowing when I may need it, with so many enemies about."

There could be no doubt of the result of the contest, for the freebooters had utterly lost heart, and numbers counted for nothing.

Before many minutes the pirate vessel was in the hands of the privateers, the greater part of her crew dead, and those who survived being too disheartened to make even a show of resistance.

The loss on the privateer had been slight, only three men having been killed and a dozen or so having received hurts which could be easily attended to.

The dead were buried at sea, the wounded cared for, the prisoners secured below, the decks cleaned, damages repaired to some extent, and a small prize crew put in charge.

"We need all the good vessels we can have," said Leon, "and this prize should be a welcome addition to our navy. Whom shall I put in charge? I have no one I wish to spare, and I have no more men than I really need."

"You might put your cousin aboard and send him home," suggested Hal. "He was returning when we found him on

board the Disturber, and is anxious to do something for his country, so he says."

Leon made no answer, and Hal continued:

"That was an unfortunate fall of his, and might have proved doubly so. He has never ceased to blame himself for his carelessness."

"I owe my life to Paul's watchfulness," said Leon. "And more than that, it was he who gave us the victory. The boy is a hero and I shall never forget him. I hope to see him a captain yet."

"Do you think that Darke Crenshawe's fall was due entirely or even in the least degree to heedlessness?" asked Hal. "He is usually most careful and every movement seems studied."

Leon said nothing for a moment, and then asked:

"Do you think that if you ran into the nearest American port with the prize that you could rejoin me at some place along the coast?"

Hal saw plainly that the boy commander did not wish to speak further of his mysterious cousin, and he answered:

"I could take the prize into port, turn her over to the government and perhaps be appointed to her with a larger crew, but I do not wish to leave you unless it is absolutely necessary."

"I think it is, and you can take Paul along. Give him a good berth if you are given command, for he is a worthy lad."

"And Crenshawe will remain with you?"

"No, of course not. He wishes to return home, you say."

"Then I wish he would go on some other vessel," said Hal, hotly. "I don't like the man, and from things I have gathered here and there, I know he bears no love toward you. I am even willing to affirm that he seeks your life."

"My dear Hal, you——"

"I am sure of it. I did not see the accident, but those who did say that but for the boy's almost miraculous intervention, Crenshawe's sword would have been driven right through your body, and I believe that the fall was purposely made, and that——"

"We had best say nothing about that," interposed Leon, quietly.

"Will not this man benefit by your death?" continued Hal. "The family is nearly extinct, you and I are all that is left, the estates, as I understand, are very large, and in the case of your death without issue——"

"I prefer not to speak further on the matter, Hal," said Leon, as quietly as before. "Crenshawe will go with you."

"He'll have no chance to harm you, then," muttered Hal, half to himself, "and if he meddles with me I can soon quiet him."

CHAPTER VII.

HAL IN DIFFICULTIES.

The Sprite and the prize were about to part company.

Hal, with a crew of fifteen men, had gone aboard the prize, Darke Crenshawe and Paul accompanying him.

Isabel Vernon and May remained on the Sprite, much to Hal's sorrow, for he could not bear to have the girl out of his sight a moment.

"I don't see why we could not have captured a parson at the same time we took the Sprite," he said, "and then May would now be my wife and could go with me on the prize."

"How do you know that I am going to marry you at all, Lieut. Hurry?" asked May, mischievously.

"Why, you said you would."

"Did I?" said May, saucily, although she blushed withal.

"Certainly you did."

"But I may change my mind. That is a woman's privilege."

"Then I wish all the more that we had captured a parson when we left Kingston," laughed Hal, "for in that event you couldn't."

"But you know that Sir Fenwick proposed for my hand before you did."

"That booby!" exclaimed Hal. "Oh, I wish I might meet him! I'd frighten what little sense he has out of his stupid head for daring to——"

"But he is immensely rich——"

"He has to be to make up for his lack of brains. One must have something in this world."

"You are jealous," laughed May.

Hal himself laughed at this, and what might have been a very pretty lovers' quarrel was brought to a sudden end.

The young sailor was now in command, and the two vessels were about to part.

Darke Crenshawe had expressed a desire to remain with Leon, but the latter, without deigning an explanation, had decided the matter at once.

"I desire that you shall go with Lieut. Hurry," he said, and the matter was ended.

The two vessels were scarcely two miles apart, having at length separated, when signals were seen flying at the peak of the prize.

"What does that mean?" muttered Leon. "An enemy in sight? Derrick!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the faithful seaman.

"Send someone aloft. Lieut. Hurry signals that there is an enemy in sight."

"Ay, ay! Ahoy, there, Jack Nubbles, you have hawk's eyes. Go aloft and see if there's any suspicious craft in the neighborhood of the prize."

"Ay, ay!" and in a moment Jack was running up the shrouds like a monkey.

Leon hurried below for his telescope, and as he came out of his cabin he met May.

"There is danger?" she asked.

"I fear so."

"To Hal's vessel? Oh, why didn't I go with him to share it!"

"Young women are usually reckoned of no account in a battle," said Leon, dryly.

"Do you think so?" asked Isabel, who had just joined her friend.

"You can both cheer us and give us your best wishes if you cannot wield a sword or a pistol," said Leon, gallantly, "and it may be that we need your prayers now."

So saying, he hurried on deck, just as Nubbles shouted down:

"I can make out another vessel, sir, but I'm not sure of her colors."

"Where away, Jack?" asked Derrick.

"Heading for Lieut. Hurry, sir, under all sail. She's armed, I take it. Looks like a frigate."

Leon ascended the main rigging a few feet above the rail, and pointed his glass in the direction of the prize.

"She keeps Hal between herself and us," he muttered. "Whether purposely or not I cannot tell. If she proves to be an enemy Hal can hardly hope to cope with her."

After trying to better make out the strange vessel for a few minutes Leon called to the man aloft:

"Can you make out what they are doing, Jack?"

"No, sir, but Mr. Hurry seems trying to get out of the way."

"Does the stranger show any colors?"

"No, sir."

"Put about!" cried Leon, suddenly. "We can afford to run

no risks. The stranger may be an enemy, and if so Hal can hardly hold his own against her."

The order was quickly executed, and the Sprite began to bear down upon the prize.

Meanwhile, on board the latter vessel matters had assumed a serious aspect.

Hal had noticed the approach of the stranger, and he had at once sent Paul for his telescope.

When the boy brought it he looked cautiously around and then whispered:

"May I tell you something, sir?"

"Yes, my lad. What is it?"

"There is one on board who wishes that yon stranger may prove a foe."

"How do you know this?"

"I have seen a look of glee on his evil face."

"Do you mean Mr. Crenshawe?" and Hal's voice sank.

"Yes. I do not like him. You are not offended?"

"No, my lad, I am not. You are my friend, as well as the captain's."

"Our captain's friends are my friends," said Paul. "Shall I keep watch?"

"Yes."

The boy at once departed, as if to obey some order, and Hal turned his glass upon the stranger.

"What has that boy been saying to the lieutenant?" mused Crenshawe, as Paul hurried forward. "Can he suspect anything? I have noticed him watching me ever since I have been aboard."

Hal scrutinized the stranger for several minutes, and then called up Hodge, who had been Derrick's mate on the Sprite.

"Take a look at yonder fellow, Hodge, and tell me what you think of her," he said. "You were impressed in the English navy and saw a good many of their ships. You may know this one."

The man touched his hat, took the glass, held it to his eye for a full minute, and then said:

"Well, I can't say as I know what her name is, sir, but she's surely English, and a frigate at that."

Hal at once signaled to Leon, and anxiously awaited a movement on the latter's part.

The stranger came steadily on, and at last Hodge declared it to be his firm opinion that she was the Vindex—one of the ships in port at Kingston at the time of their escape.

Hal at once began to sheer off and take a course which would bring him nearer to the Sprite.

Shortly afterward the latter was seen to have altered her course.

A moment later extra sail was put on the stranger, and she was seen to be bearing directly down upon them.

A few moments later the British ensign was displayed and a shot fired.

"They take us for the pirate," muttered Hal. "What shall I do—show my own colors?"

"You are not ashamed of them, sir?" asked Paul, who had come up unnoticed.

"No, my lad, never, and I will show them! Up with the old flag!" he added, in a ringing tone.

In a few moments the brave old flag fluttered in the breeze, and Hal ordered the deck cleared for action.

On came the Englishman, and soon opened fire, being superior in every respect to the former pirate vessel.

Hal answered the fire and then the air being thick with smoke, quickly changed his course so as to run down to the Sprite.

The frigate evidently suspected as much, for when the smoke cleared she was seen running on a course which would bring her between the two vessels.

"She intends to cut us out," thought Hal, "but I mean to give her a good fight for all that. Stand by your guns, my bullies! Make every shot tell."

A ringing cheer arose from the handful of men on board, and a moment later a sheet of flame belched from her starboard ports, followed by a roar from a half dozen guns, the vessel rocking beneath the shock.

On came the enemy, and a well-directed shot presently struck the foremast half way between the deck and the cross-trees, sending huge splinters flying in all directions.

Right upon the heels of this missile came another which struck in the same place, cut the mast in two, and brought all the top hamper down upon the deck.

"Clear away!" shouted Hal.

At that moment the boy Paul sprang to his side.

"Not a moment is to be lost, sir!" he almost hissed. "There is a fire below decks, and it will soon reach the magazine!"

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INSOLENT DEMAND AND ITS REFUSAL.

For a moment Hal was made speechless by the boy's startling announcement.

"When did you discover this?" he at length gasped.

"But this moment. It is not the result of accident—it was design. It will be impossible to check it now."

"Give 'em another broadside!" roared Hal. "Haul all the guns over to starboard!"

The order was quickly put in execution, the gunners ramming home their charges.

"Go tell Hodge and Hawler as quickly as possible to be ready to leave the ship on an instant's notice," said Hal, "and keep your eyes open."

The boy was gone in a moment, and Hal, glancing first toward the frigate and then toward the Sprite, called out:

"Fire! Let them have all you can give them!"

There was a roar that shook the heavens, and the smoke was so thick that one could scarcely see the length of the vessel.

In another moment Paul was at Hal's side.

"They are ready, sir."

"You have seen nothing else?"

"The fire below is gaining. If you attempt to reach the magazine now, you will only fan the flames. I have closed all the doors in the bulkheads, and locked them as well."

"And you suspect——"

"I have no evidence against anyone, sir."

"Give 'em another, lively now!" shouted Hal, and then to Paul, "Stay here, my lad, we shall soon leave."

A heavy, double shot from the frigate now carried away the stump of the foremast, which, in its fall, tore a huge hole in the deck.

"Fire!" roared Hal.

Hardly had the order been carried out when there came another.

"Lower the boats on the port side and pull for the Sprite. Every man to his place. I will shoot the first who forgets this."

The boats were made ready in the briefest time, without the slightest confusion, every man taking his proper position.

"Mr. Crenshawe, you go with Hodge," said Hal, noticing the polite cousin of the boy captain standing irresolute by the mainmast.

The man smiled, as was his wont, but Hal watched his face narrowly and thought he detected an evil look upon it.

"Lower—down with the companions—all hands overboard!"

Hal was the last to leave the ship, and Paul went down just ahead of him.

The Sprite had now opened fire upon the frigate, but the distance was still too great to hope that her shots would prove effective.

"The more smoke, the better for us," thought Hal. "Should I have warned the enemy? If they attempt to board they will be blown to atoms."

They had barely gone a dozen boat-lengths from the ship before there came a great puff of white smoke which seemed to shut out the sight of everything, and, immediately afterwards, there was a tremendous burst of sound as if all of heaven's artillery had been discharged at one moment.

"You were none too soon with your warning, my lad," said Hal, in a low tone, for as yet none of the men had suspected the real reason for so soon abandoning the prize.

For several minutes the surface of the sea was obscured by the dense smoke which hung over it, and it was impossible for one on either of the vessels to see the other or the boats.

Leon had not seen Hal's maneuver, and when the pirate ship blew up he had no doubt that the gallant young fellow had perished with all hands.

"A shot has reached the magazine," he muttered, "and they have perished. Poor Hal! I did not think to lose him so soon."

"The Englishman may have been hurt as well, sir," said Derrick. "Perhaps it would be as well to go down and see."

"Yes, and avenge the poor fellow," said Leon.

The Sprite bore straight down towards where the frigate had last been seen, when suddenly, as the smoke began to clear away they heard a voice right out of the water, calling to them:

"On board the Sprite, ahoy! Port your helm or you'll run us down."

"My eyes! what's that?" cried one of the sailors, hurrying to the rail.

"Hard up!" shouted another, who had run out upon the bowsprit.

"What is it, Nubbles?" asked Leon, running forward.

"Lieut. Hurry and the boats, sir, right under our feet. Throw 'em a line there, Bill Capstan!"

The Sprite had sheered off none too soon, and now, as she dashed on, the smoke having lifted, the boats were seen almost alongside.

The wooden-legged boatswain threw a line which was caught by one of the men in Hal's boat, and quickly made fast.

"Throw her up in the wind; lie to! stand by to take up the boats!" roared the boy captain.

Hal's boat was quickly hauled alongside, and the young lieutenant and his men clambered on board as the Sprite hove to.

"Thank Heaven that you are still alive, Hal, old friend!" cried Leon, grasping the other's hand warmly.

"Yes, and all of us—not a man is missing," said Hal, and then, dropping his voice, "and we all owe our lives to Paul. That boy is a hero. I will tell you more anon."

At that moment, the Sprite being hove to, as the boats were pulling towards her, the frigate suddenly opened fire upon them, having discovered them after the air had cleared.

Not a vestige of the pirate ship remained, and it was only by a miracle that the Vindex had escaped.

Had they succeeded in boarding her, as they had intended, not a man of the boarding party would have remained alive.

Had the explosion taken place five minutes later the consequences would have been most disastrous.

The commander of the frigate, throwing aside all the laws of humanity, now opened fire on the boats.

A solid round shot struck the bow of one of them, and in an instant it was shattered and its occupants thrown into the sea.

Luckily one of the others was close at hand, and the men were speedily rescued.

A second shot narrowly missed a second boat, falling into the sea with a great splash just astern.

"The brutes!" cried Leon, indignantly, "to fire upon defenceless men! Give them a broadside, Derrick, and let it be hot and strong!"

The men having come aboard, the boats were abandoned, and the Sprite put once more upon her course.

As she dashed down upon the frigate, a broadside was poured in upon the latter with terrible effect.

The mainmast was badly splintered, two boats were destroyed, a gun had been dismounted, and a large section of the rail torn away.

As the Sprite swept by, the gallant privateers gave a ringing cheer, and Leon quickly put his vessel about so as to renew the attack.

"On board the Sprite!" suddenly hailed an officer on the quarter-deck of the frigate as a white flag was displayed.

"Ay, ay!" cried Leon, as he gave orders to lie to.

"Who commands the Sprite?"

"Captain Leon Crenshawe, bearer of letters of marque from the Congress of the United States."

"Is Miss Vernon a prisoner on board that vessel? If so, and you will give her up, we will allow you four-and-twenty hours' start."

"Who is it who makes these terms?" asked Leon, the two vessels being now not more than three fathoms distant one from the other.

"Captain Sir Alexander Havens, commander of His Majesty's ship-of-war Vindex," was the answer.

"Then tell the most august Captain Sir Alexander Havens, of his most gracious Majesty's royal navy, that I accept no terms from him, and that if he wishes to speak with me, he must do so in person."

At that moment a man of commanding presence appeared on the quarter-deck of the Vindex.

"Be careful what you do; you miserable young pirate," stormed the newcomer. "Not satisfied with luring us almost to our deaths, you make prisoners of helpless women, insult His Majesty's officers, and——"

"Enough!" cried Leon. "We are not pirates and you know it. We do not fire upon men escaping for their lives from a burning ship. Miss Vernon is on board this vessel, but is not a prisoner. She is here voluntarily and will remain here."

"You miserable young braggart, she is my affianced wife. Give her up or we will blow your vessel out of water, hang you all at the yardarm, and take the lady as well."

"You have only to furl your flag of truce," said Leon, "to have hostilities resumed. Miss Vernon would die sooner than give herself up. I have no ill-will against you, Sir Alexander, but if you persist in your demands I shall resist you to the last, and, if necessary, destroy both you and your vessel."

"Insolent young dog!" roared Sir Alexander, "your blood be upon your head, for I won't spare a man or boy of your crew after that!"

So saying, the enraged commander snatched the white flag from the sailor holding it, and dashed it into the sea.

"All hands stand by to board!" he roared. "Now, then, give them a volley!"

"Treacherous hounds!" hissed Leon. "I might have known. About ship! All hands to stations. Give her a last broadside and away."

The Vindex was a much larger vessel than the Sprite, and

Leon would not endanger the lives of those he loved by engaging in a contest which promised to end in the destruction of one or both vessels, and he therefore determined to retreat.

The Sprite was soon put about, and a volley poured in upon the frigate as she sped away.

Even with the preparations for attack which Sir Alexander had already made, while under a flag of truce, thus violating all naval rules, the Sprite's young commander was first to fire, and the Vindex's broadside, which was to prove so disastrous, fell harmlessly into the sea.

The boarding party had no work to do, for the saucy Yankee slipped away from them and was soon a mere speck on the horizon.

CHAPTER IX.

A DOGGED PURSUER.

Leon had done well in beating a retreat, for he had left the Vindex not three miles behind when three other vessels were seen bearing down upon the scene, all of them flying the British flag.

The four gave chase, but by nightfall the Sprite had eluded them all, and was speeding down the coast of South America under all sail.

The next morning another large vessel was seen to the northward, having evidently come across the ocean from Gibraltar, from the course she was on.

She hoisted her colors and gave chase, evidently taking the Sprite for a merchant vessel, and probably wishing to increase her crew by taking out of the smaller vessel all men supposed to be English, in the arbitrary fashion then in vogue.

Leon flew the stars and stripes and kept upon his course, having no desire to give battle to a vessel so much larger than his own.

He would have preferred to go into the North Atlantic, where he would be more apt to find the enemy's ships, but there was no choice left him at the moment, and so he took to his heels.

As the day wore on and the enemy kept up the chase, it was evident that the commander had learned all about the Sprite, and had made up his mind to capture her.

At noon she was still in pursuit, and when night came they had not shaken her off.

There was a full moon, which rose as the sun went down, and the whole ocean was soon bathed in a flood of silver, which revealed plainly all objects within the range of vision.

"He is a determined fellow, that, is he not, cousin?" said Darke Crenshawe, as Leon came out of the cabin, after an absence below of half an hour.

"Yes," said Leon, shortly.

"You will not alter your course, I presume, while the moon shines so brilliantly?" pursued the other, seemingly unabashed at the boy commander's curt answer.

"You will probably be aware of any change, of course, when it takes place," said Leon, ascending the companion ladder leading to the quarter-deck.

"Ah—yes, very likely," said Darke, smiling.

He was about to follow Leon, when the latter said firmly:

"Mr. Crenshawe, no one is allowed on the quarter-deck with the captain save his officers or servants. You belong to neither class."

"As you please," said Darke, sweetly, and with his usual smile. "I am not well versed in naval etiquette, and never dreamed of intruding. You seem moody to-night, my dear cousin."

"A truce to your flatteries!" said Leon, spiritedly. "I am in no mood for them. Pray do not insist so constantly upon our relationship. I am by no means proud of it."

The young captain strode to the taffrail and gazed abstractedly across the moonlit ocean, while Darke Crenshawe walked carelessly forward, humming an air he had heard one of the sailors singing that evening.

"Still suspicious," he mused, when by himself. "What does he know? What can he know? Does that brat of a boy know anything? It may be to my advantage to silence him. Why was the order to leave the ship given so suddenly? Did any one know of the danger? If so, why was no alarm given?"

The striking of the ship's bell broke in upon the man's musings, and with a start he turned upon his heel and went aft.

"I must be careful," he thought. "I would have betrayed myself in another minute."

"I don't like that black-browed fellow, with his smile and his fine lady's way," grunted old Bill, with whom Darke had nearly collided, as he leaned against the rail. "What was he muttering about?"

"That is what I would like to know myself, boatswain," said Paul, coming out from the shadow of the house on deck.

"Hello, Hop-o'-my-thumb, are you there?" asked the old seaman in surprise.

"Yes," said Paul, lowering his voice, "and if you're wise, Bill, you'll treasure up whatever you hear that polite gentleman saying, and say nothing about it."

"That's a clever lad," muttered old Bill, as Paul strolled aft, "and as brave as he is clever. He'll be a commander himself one of these days, if no stray shot carries him off."

The pursuit lasted for five entire days, the Sprite being unable to shake off the enemy, while the frigate could not diminish the Sprite's lead no matter though the wind blew a gale or simply in zephyrs.

At last a storm came out of the northeast, the waves rose higher, and the wind blew with the force of a tornado; the sky was as black as ink, and the seething, foam-crested waves seemed to be pursuing the little vessel relentlessly.

An intense blackness settled upon the sea, nothing could be seen ahead or astern, and it was as if they were alone upon the ocean, alone in the very world itself.

"So long as I have the sea before me," mused Leon, "I fear not, but if I were driven upon some unseen rock or dashed upon a lee shore, nothing could save us. I must try and make a port as soon as possible."

For days and days the little vessel drove before the wind, and it was only by the constant care of the brave boy captain and his gallant crew that they were not swamped.

It was more than a week before the gale spent itself, and in all that time the Sprite drove before it, stanch and steady, riding the waves proudly, defying the winds, and proving that, like her young commander, she had a heart of oak, and that nothing could daunt her proud spirit.

CHAPTER X.

AN INTERRUPTION.

In the beautiful harbor of Montevideo, shaped like a horse-shoe, and affording a safe haven to storm-tossed vessels, with the grand old mountain crowned with its quaint Spanish castle behind, and the town itself, with its neat houses and well-kept streets, its rows of trees, and its shiny beach in the foreground, the Sprite lay at anchor.

When the gale had blown itself out, and Leon had taken his bearings, he found that he was so far down the coast that the port of Montevideo was the nearest where he could put in to make necessary repairs, provision his vessel, and get more men in case he wished to increase his crew.

It was still a long way to the old Spanish port, since made the capital of the republic of Uruguay, but there was much to be done to the vessel, and the distance was not so great as back to Rio, and the young commander therefore decided to go on.

He saw nothing of his persistent enemy after the gale, and the principal reason for his going further south was that he might avoid her, as it was quite likely that she would still be on the watch for him, and he did not care to risk a combat with a combatant so greatly superior to him until better prepared for the fight.

Montevideo being a neutral port, the Sprite was as safe there as she would have been in any American harbor, but nevertheless Leon said very little about his mission there, and did what was necessary to be done as quietly as possible.

They had been in Montevideo a week, and had succeeded in having all the necessary repairs done by the payment of considerable money, no other inducement seeming to move the indolent, rest-loving Spaniards, and Leon began to make preparations for leaving.

There was one ceremony that must be performed before they went away.

This was the double marriage between Leon and Isabel, and Hal and May.

Isabel was ready to become Leon's wife at any time, for then the young commander would have a right to protect her that no one could gainsay.

May was willing to be married when Isabel was, and she had told Hal so a dozen times, although at other times she pretended that she would not.

When everything had been done upon the Sprite that was needed, Leon and Hal set out for the cathedral, accompanied by the ladies and some of the crew.

They were obliged to stop at the house of a notary to procure a license, and here some time was spent, as Leon was the only one in the party who spoke Spanish.

Paul, the cabin boy, had been in Spain when much younger, and he spoke the language fluently, so he was sent ahead to apprise the priest of the intended wedding.

The notary asked a good many questions regarding the parentage of the ladies, if their parents consented, if either of the men had been married, if there were to be any settlements, if any impediment to the union existed, and more to the purpose and not to the purpose, till Hal at last grew impatient and said:

"Dear me, I never supposed it was such a job getting married. I wish we were in a civilized land, for then we would have had it over long ago."

However, the business was settled at last, Leon gave the notary a good deal more than his fee, the licenses were made out and signed by all the contracting parties and, armed with these precious papers, the boy captain started for the cathedral.

On the way thither they met Paul, who quickly drew Leon aside and whispered:

"A British ship has just come into the harbor, and a great frigate lies just outside, the water being too shallow for her to enter. I thought you would be delayed, and I went down to the port to look at her."

"Yes, yes, my boy, and you have learned that——"

"The one in the harbor is the Vindex, with Captain Sir Alexander Havens on board; the other is that big fellow who followed us so persistently."

"We must get away before we are discovered," said Leon, calling Hal to his side.

"What is the matter?"

"The Vindex is in the harbor."

"But the port is a neutral one!"

"Exactly, but the high sea is not. There is no time to be lost."

As they proceeded they encountered several English seamen in the street, and near the cathedral they saw an officer, his uniform telling them at once what he was.

"An English lieutenant!" exclaimed May; "the first one I've seen. What is he doing here?"

"The port of Montevideo is open to all nations, I believe," said Hal, lightly, and in another minute they entered the church.

There was some service being conducted as they entered, and they waited in the rear, Paul going forward a few paces and explaining matters to a priest.

The place was dark and damp and gloomy, and even the blaze of light around the altar at the further end could not dispel a feeling of chilliness that suddenly possessed Isabel.

"I wish it were over," she whispered to Leon, to whose strong arm she clung.

"Courage, dearest, all will yet be well," he said.

"But the boy brought you some evil message. What was it?"

"Nothing can separate us, my own—nothing that we need fear."

"I cannot think so," she murmured. "I feel certain that some danger threatens."

They were obliged to wait a considerable time before the service was concluded, and then one of the priests came down the aisle and beckoned to Paul.

The boy hurried forward, exchanged a few words, and then returned to Leon and said:

"There is some objection because you are not Romanists, but I said that the license had been granted, and that you would donate something to the church, and now it will be all right."

"That boy is a treasure," said May. "I had really begun to think that we could not be married."

The party now walked slowly up the broad central aisle, preceded by two chanting priests, and as they neared the altar the organ pealed forth joyously, and a burst of clear, boyish voices came from the choir high above their heads.

At the same moment two English naval officers, accompanied by some Spanish official of high rank and a squad of soldiers, halted in front of the cathedral.

"They are about to begin!" cried the English officer of higher rank in Spanish. "Arrest the miscreant at once. Take your men in and hurry the villain off to prison."

"A soldier cannot enter the house of the Lord except to worship or confess his sins," said the officer.

"But if we wait to arrest him here the mischief will have been done. I tell you, the lady is my affianced wife, and this young man is a pirate—a hunted felon. You must do something at once."

"Yes, but not to arrest. We can forbid the marriage."

"Good! That will be better. Then we can arrest him afterwards. It was very fortunate that Lieutenant the Honorable Mr. Valentine Clyde-Clifton recognized the fellow."

The other officer bowed low and said:

"It is not likely, sir, that I would forget him nor the ladies. One of them was to marry my cousin, the Honorable Fitz Roy Boby, of His Majesty's ship-of-war——"

"Pardon, gentlemen," said the Spaniard, "the music ceases. We must hasten."

The wedding party paused at the altar rail and knelt to

receive the benediction, the music fell almost to a hush, and only the voice of the priest could be heard.

The ceremony proceeded to the point where the minister asked if there were any valid reasons why these two should not be joined in the rear and three men rushed down the main aisle.

"I forbid the marriage!" cried one. "The lady is my promised bride, she is the ward of the English governor of Jamaica, she is not of age, she has no right to marry!"

"Captain Havens!" muttered Hal. "What is he doing here? This is a pretty complication."

There was instant confusion, and Leon, springing to his feet, faced the angry Englishman, and said:

"Captain Havens, you have nothing to say in this matter. This lady is to be my wife, and she is neither under your protection nor subject to your wishes."

"She is the ward of Sir Neville Mountjoy and my promised bride."

"She is the ward of the United States. She is an American. You have no voice in the affair whatever."

"I forbid the marriage!" cried Sir Alexander, hotly, and then, speaking in Spanish, "the lady is a ward of his excellency the governor-general of Jamaica, she is a minor, she is not a Catholic and cannot——"

"Your reverence," said Leon, "all this has been settled. This man has no claim, the lady does not wish to be his wife, he has no——"

"The man is a pirate, a fugitive from justice, a man with innocent blood on his hands," said the Spanish officer, rapidly. "He has not confessed, he is a heretic, he cannot be married in a Christian church!"

"Sir," said Leon, "you shall answer to me elsewhere for this insult. I remember where I am, which you do not, or I would kill you where you stand."

"The marriage cannot take place," said the minister.

"Arrest the pirate—to prison with him!" hissed the Spaniard.

"Do not let her go with him; take her from him!" cried Sir Alexander.

"My sons, this is the house of the Lord. I cannot forbid any to come or to go. The young man must not be molested while under this roof."

CHAPTER XI.

THE FOX ESCAPES.

Leon and Hal, with Isabel and May between them, and flanked by the gallant tars of the Sprite, passed down the aisle towards the door, the Spanish and English officers falling back and scowling at them.

Sir Alexander would have drawn his sword, but the Spaniard restrained him.

Paul had suddenly disappeared, but in the confusion his absence was scarcely noticed.

"It will be easy to raise a mob against them, once they reach the plaza," whispered the Spaniard to Sir Alexander, as they fell back. "I can find a dozen cut-throats in as many seconds who will be glad to make an end of them."

"You are right, Don Jacinto," said the lieutenant. "Sir Alexander forgets."

The opposing party hurriedly made their exit, and Hal whispered to Leon:

"They mean mischief. Be ready with your sword at any instant."

They had barely reached the plaza outside when there arose

a cry, and a score of evil-looking fellows, armed with stiletos, rushed forward.

"Down with the pirates—down with them! Kill the heretics!"

It was the religious zeal more than the hatred of robbers that incensed the mob, and an angry roar arose as the cry was caught up and repeated. In an instant nearly a hundred savage men and women surrounded the little party.

Leon and Hal drew their swords, resolved to sell their lives dearly, and the foremost ruffians hesitated before attacking such determined foemen.

Suddenly a clear, shrill voice was heard and a boy broke through the mob with a dozen Yankee tars at his heels, crying:

"For shame! Would you attack Americanos, your friends, your allies, at the bidding of the hated English, men of a nation who have always robbed and abused the Spaniard? Who wrested the fortress of Gibraltar from you, who robbed you of rich provinces in the new world, who have made slaves of your governors and dethroned your kings? Is it the Americano? No! It is the hated Englishman."

"Bravo! Live the American, perish the Briton!" cried the mob.

It was Paul who had suddenly turned the tide, and as he stood there in the open space between the two opposing parties, speaking rapidly and with excited gestures, he looked like some inspiring hero of old, and all were forced to listen.

"Here come Americans, men of the same country," he cried. "They come to your cathedral to pray, and these tyrant English, these ancient enemies of all Spaniards, seek their lives by lies and deceit. We are no pirates; we seek to overthrow tyranny! Down with Spain's foes and long live all Americans!"

The crowd took up the cry, and Leon found he had a hundred to aid him where before all were his deadly enemies.

Sir Alexander turned pale as the mob began to surge toward him, and it might have gone hard with the Englishman had not Don Jacinto suddenly hurried them into the church, by way of a small door at one side.

"Curse the brat!" he hissed. "It needs but a word to turn a mob like this, at any time, and he spoke it. Who is he—whence came he? I never saw him."

"I have seen him," said the lieutenant, "but I do not know him. We do not associate with persons of his class. He is a shop-keeper's son, no doubt, and perhaps a scullion on some vessel."

"Scullion or not," said Don Jacinto, "he would have caused your deaths in another moment, but for my promptness. The lad is a hero, whoever he is, and saved the day for the American captain."

Meanwhile Leon and his friends had crossed the plaza, and had turned down a street leading to the harbor.

They had nearly reached the water when they met Darke Crenshawe, smiling and bowing, and more effusive than ever.

Leon went at once to the landing-place, had assisted Isabel into the boat, and was about to follow, when two men approached rapidly along the wharf, having come out from behind a warehouse.

One of these was Sir Alexander Havens, and as he came nearer he drew his sword and said:

"Now, you young braggart, draw and defend yourself!"

"Yes, draw and defend yourself!" said the other, who was very foppishly dressed, although wearing the uniform of a lieutenant of the British navy.

"It's the booby!" cried Hal. "What does he want?"

"Sir," said the other, "that lady in the boat is my bride that is to be."

May laughed, but Hal roared outright and replied:

"No, Mr. Fitzroy Booby, you are mistaken. 'She is to be my wife.'"

"Boby, sir—damme, sir, the Hon. Mr. Fitz Roy——"

"Booby, however you spell it," laughed Hal. "Put up your sword, sir, and return to your vessel as speedily as possible before the mob learns you are English."

Paul, Hal and a dozen sailors had thrown themselves between Leon and the furious Englishman.

"I challenge you to mortal combat, you Yankee scorpion!" hissed Captain Havens. "You have insulted me, and I demand satisfaction!"

"The duel will be fought at sea, Captain Havens," said Leon. "You have allies lying outside the harbor waiting for us. Get all your friends together and attack us when we go out. You dare not do so here."

"Dare not!" hissed the Englishman.

"No, you dare not!"

"Another insult!"

"This is a neutral port. If you attempt to fire on us, I will appeal to the Spanish authorities, and your ships will be blown out of water."

Sir Alexander fumed and threatened to cut Leon down where he stood, but at that moment Don Jacinto, Lieut. Clyde-Clifton and one or two strange officers came hurrying forward.

"Lose not a moment, Sir Alexander," said the Spaniard. "Your escape from the church has been discovered, the populace is furious against you and your men, and will tear you to pieces. Enter your boats at once, for the mob may be here at any moment."

Indeed, even as he spoke, a sullen roar was heard at the head of the street leading from the cathedral, and a crowd of men and women could be seen hurrying along it.

"I shall meet you again!" hissed Havens, as he was hurried away by Don Jacinto.

"Very likely," said Leon, and in another moment he had taken his place in the boat and was being rowed out to the Sprite.

By the time the angry mob had reached the esplanade, the boats were well out upon the water.

A shower of stones and bullets flew after the boat containing the English officers, and some of the more active ones seized boats lying at the piers and followed the fugitives.

When Leon reached the Sprite, which lay at some distance from the Vindex, he gave orders that no one must leave to go on shore, that no one was to be permitted to come on board, and that no one must remain on deck unless concealed.

For the rest of the day there was no life visible on the Sprite from the vessels in the harbor.

The Englishmen kept a close watch on her, but could learn nothing.

Outside the harbor the English frigate lay in wait to follow the Sprite as soon as she came out, but she remained at anchor within the harbor.

At night it was the same, and the Sprite might have been manned by the dead for all the life she showed.

There was no lights, not a sound could be heard, no one left the ship, no one went on board.

Until a late hour the English captain waited anxiously for any movement on the part of the silent privateer.

The night grew black, the tempest arose, and all were glad to seek shelter, but when morning came, the Sprite had unaccountably disappeared.

CHAPTER XII.

IN A NAMELESS SEA.

"Well, of all the strange adventures I've had in my time, and I've seen a power of 'em, this is the most surprisin' I ever had!"

The events that had occurred were so strange that even so good a romancer as old Bill was set at naught, and could invent nothing to equal them.

The vessel lay at rest on the calm waters of a land-locked bay; toward the sea stretched a line of reefs, beyond which the waters were in a state of constant agitation, beyond which them lay the shores of what seemed an island, a stretch of white beach, a thick grove of trees and a line of white hills beyond.

Where they were, or how they had come hither they knew not, for at one moment they had been battling with the winds and waves, and at the next they were on an even keel, and when day suddenly dawned, an hour later, they found themselves in the bay in front of the island.

That night, in the harbor of Montevideo, when they had stolen away under cover of the darkness and in the face of a terrible storm, the wind had borne them towards the south at frantic speed.

There was nothing to do but run before the wind, but the waves seemed to follow faster than they could scud, and before long they were in danger of being swamped.

Three monstrous billows, one after the other, rushed upon them from behind, carried away the binnacle, broke in the skylight, flooded the cabin, and nearly swamped them.

The rudder was well-nigh useless, the wheel refused to act, and they drove on and on, helpless to resist wind and wave.

A lightning bolt struck the iron bolt of one of the cabin windows, passed inside, and so deranged the only compass remaining, that it became utterly useless.

For days and days, without the light of the sun or stars to guide them, they were hurried on, now this way, now that, till all points of the compass were alike, day meant no more than night, and they were hopelessly—helplessly adrift in a nameless sea.

How long a time they were thus beset no one knew, but at length one black, tempestuous night, wilder and blacker than any that the oldest of them had known, when they had been driving madly before the wind for hours, a giant wave suddenly lifted them high in air, and then they were in calm waters, and when morning came and the sun arose they beheld the most beautiful sight they had ever seen.

It was this and all that had gone before that puzzled the old boatswain, and forced him to admit that he had never had a like experience.

They had no instruments of any sort, and where they were was something that they knew not, and had no means of knowing.

"Let us go ashore and see what sort of land we have come to," said Leon to Hal, an hour after sunrise.

They still possessed two boats, and in one of these they embarked, accompanied by Derrick, and started off to make a slight exploration of the island.

They called it an island, but they were not certain that it was not part of a continent, though what one it could be they had no present means of knowing.

"There are plenty of trees here," said Leon, as they passed through the grove, "and we can get all the timber we need for repairs."

The trees were not very close together, and they had no trouble in making their way along, Leon being anxious to see what was on the other side.

In about ten minutes they came out upon an open space, and Leon uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"The place is inhabited!" he cried.

They were standing upon a sort of plateau, not more than twenty feet wide, but of considerable length, while below them, in a deep valley, so deep that they could easily look down

upon the roofs and spires of the tallest buildings, lay a most strange and beautiful city.

The houses, for the most part, seemed built of marble, and in the center was one larger and more imposing than all the rest, two tall square towers arising to a height of thirty or forty feet above the main building.

There were broad avenues, well laid out and crossed by others at perfect right angles, while at intervals large, open squares could be seen, with marble columns in the center.

It seemed to be a city capable of containing forty or fifty thousand people, but not a soul was visible.

An utter silence brooded over the place, not a living thing, neither bird, brute nor man, could be seen, and as they gazed the little party seemed to feel that they were looking upon a city of the dead.

Leon advanced to the edge of the plateau and found himself standing on the brink of a sheer precipice.

There seemed to be no means of descent, but further to the right Hal declared that he saw a path leading down to the city below.

"There must have been some means of getting up and down," he said. "These people would certainly leave their city now and then."

"Where are the people?" asked Paul. "There isn't a soul in sight."

"Let us go down," said Leon, walking along the brink and looking for a path.

They presently found one, which, although somewhat steep, was broad enough for safety, and down it they all went.

At the distance of a hundred yards down it passed under an overhanging shelf of rock and then turned and went in the opposite direction, but still descending.

There was a series of these inclined planes, and the lowest was right under the cliff, so that in looking up only the rock could be seen.

Reaching the level they found themselves in front of a wide avenue, fully a mile in length, at the further end of which was the great white building with the two square towers which they had seen from above.

Grass grew in the street, plants had come up between the stones that gave access to the houses, vines had climbed about the door-posts, and flowers bloomed in marble basins where once there had been fountains.

Great festoons of moss hung from the eaves, trees had sprung up in some doorways, and here and there the grass concealed the pavement of some inner court, seen through open windows, and where chariots had perhaps once rattled along the marble-paved street, rank vegetation had sprung up between the stones and the feet gave forth no echoing sound.

But still there was no other sign of life, not a bird or insect or reptile could be seen, and as for human beings, one might as well have looked for them in a tomb.

"This is the strangest place I ever saw," muttered Derrick.

"It is dead beyond a doubt," said Leon, "and has been for ages. No one knows how many years have passed since man has set foot in these silent street."

"Shall we go on?" said Hal.

"No, we had best return. I would not care to live in such a place, with all its magnificence. The very air seems dead, and then, have you thought that we must be below the sea level? The rise from the beach to the edge of the precipice above was but slight, and at any moment, for aught we know, the sea may come pouring down upon us."

"It certainly has not done so for many ages," said Hal, laughing.

"That we do not know," answered Leon, retracing his steps. "There is nothing here to support life, neither food nor water, and that's what we must find. Let us go back."

They left the strange dead city behind them, and walked leisurely toward the path leading to the heights above.

"It must have been a great task to have cut this path right through the rock," observed Hal, as they were ascending.

"Perhaps it was built, not cut," said Leon. "There seems to be regular courses of stone overhead."

"They don't have earthquakes in this queer land then," said Derrick, "or the whole thing would come tumbling about one's ears."

They had turned three or four times, and were on almost the last incline, when, as they were passing under one of the stone arches, there came a sudden grating sound, and then a trembling was perceptible in the rocky ceiling.

Paul, who was in advance, turned and threw himself violently against Leon, hurling him backwards, at the same time uttering a shrill cry of alarm.

In a second, a huge block of stone, weighing many tons, fell from the roof upon the path just behind the daring boy, completely blocking the road to the top of the cliff.

CHAPTER XIII.

A WAY OUT.

For an instant after the echo of the crash of the falling rock had died away no one spoke a word.

"Back!" cried Paul; "the whole arch may fall in and crush us!"

The party retreated to the end of the incline, but there were no further signs of danger.

The stone that had fallen completely blocked their way, for they could not get over or around it.

Below, the inclines ran through tunnels, but here one side was open to the air.

The path was bounded on one side by a wall of rock, on the other by a sheer precipice, the stone that had fallen hanging over the edge so that to get around it was an impossibility.

"Did any of you hear a strange sound after the rock had fallen?" asked the boy.

"The echo, that was all," said Leon.

"Yes, but there was more; there was a wild laugh, as if in glee over our fate."

"Imagination, Paul," said Hal. "There was no one above. How could anyone cast down a solid rock like that?"

"I don't know, sir, but I certainly heard the laugh."

They had now retraced their steps and soon reached the second plane below, which ran through a sort of tunnel.

Paul was in the rear, and as he turned the angle his foot slipped under a loose stone and he staggered forward, striking his hand against the inner wall of rock.

It gave forth a hollow sound, and the boy instantly called the attention of the others to the fact.

Suddenly, to the intense astonishment of all, that part of the wall fell in, as though a slab of stone had turned on a pivot, and an opening large enough to admit a man was disclosed.

There seemed to be a passage of considerable length before them, for the sunlight penetrated to a distance of several yards, and beyond was darkness.

"Where does it lead to?" mused Leon. "Perhaps to some deep pit from which there can be no escape, or perhaps to some labyrinth where we might wander until death came to end our sufferings."

"If we only had a light we might venture in," said Hal; "but we have no means of procuring one."

"We can moisten some powder with saliva and make it into a paste, and then light it with a flint," said Paul. "That will give us a good torch."

With a handful of gunpowder from a flask at his belt he formed a cone, six inches in length and two or three wide at the base, tapering to a rather blunt point.

With a flint from one of Leon's pistols the cone was ignited, and began to burn slowly, sending out a strong, white light.

Derrick took the peculiar torch in his hand and entered the passage, followed by the others, the path stretching out straight before them.

The party had proceeded for a considerable distance, when Derrick said:

"Make another cone of powder, my lad. This un is gettin' pretty well used up, and it'll reach my hand before I know it."

Paul took the man's powder horn and was about to pour some into his hand when Derrick uttered a sudden cry and hurled the burning cone to the ground.

"Look out!" cried Paul, suddenly.

Derrick had run against him, and in another moment the horn was dashed from the boy's hand.

Some of the powder must have been spilled, for in an instant there was a puff of smoke and then a blaze of light, followed by an explosion.

Those who had not thrown themselves upon their faces were dashed to the ground by the force of the shock and the whole passage seemed full of smoke.

In a few moments Leon arose to his feet and said:

"What has happened? There seems to be more light in here than before."

"So there is!" cried Hal, springing up and dashing forward.

"There is more light. The explosion has torn a hole in the roof of the passage."

"Why, here are some steps," said Paul, "and we were very nearly to the end of the passage. Look! Can you not see a wall just beyond?"

There was, indeed, a flight of stone steps, some seven or eight in number, leading up at one side to the ground above, and Derrick had probably stumbled against the bottom step when he had struck Paul's hand.

Leon hurried up the steps, followed by Hal, Paul and Derrick, and found himself in a grove of trees, a shattered slab of stone lying on the ground near the opening.

"This must be the grove we passed through on the way to the cliff," said Hal.

They were obliged to cut their way through a thicket with their swords and knives, but at last they came out into more open ground, and a few minutes later were in plain sight of the sea.

As they left the grove they saw Darke Crenshawe coming towards them, accompanied by two or three of the sailors.

The man was smiling as sweetly as ever, and when he came up said:

"We have all been under considerable apprehension as to your safety, my dear cousin. Did you suffer greatly by the shock? I hardly expected to feel earthquakes in this place, and I must confess that I was considerably alarmed."

"We are all safe," cried Leon. "How did you happen to come ashore?"

"Merely out of curiosity, cousin," said Crenshawe. "But I am glad that I did, for at the first shock I set out to find you."

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE DEAD CITY.

There were no further visits made to the strange city in the sunken valley for two or three days, as there were other matters to attend to.

Repairs on the vessel progressed rapidly, and the next step was the departure from the island.

Here an unforeseen difficulty arose.

The vessel had undoubtedly been carried over the reefs by a tremendous tidal wave into the calm water beyond, for otherwise it must have been dashed to pieces.

It was utterly impossible to take the vessel out of the bay beyond the reefs into the open ocean.

"We are lost on a nameless sea—cast away on a dead island," said Leon. "There is nothing living here except the grass and the trees."

A spring of water was found at a considerable distance from the beach, and care was taken to provide a liberal supply for the vessel without delay.

"Since there seems to be no present means of escape from the island," said Leon one day, "perhaps it will be as well to pay another visit to the city below in search of further information."

Having decided to visit the city again, a party was made up one morning, and under the guidance of Derrick, they set out on a tour of exploration.

There were Leon, Hal, and the ladies, Derrick, Hodge, the Dutch boy, and old Bill Capstan, and, at the last, Darke Crenshawe determined to go with the rest.

Paul had decided to remain on the vessel or to go elsewhere on the island, but when he saw that Darke was going with the rest to the dead city, he changed his mind.

Buckling on his sword and putting a pistol in his belt, he joined the others, and remained near enough to Leon not to attract attention, and yet so that he would be ready to spring to the boy captain's assistance at the slightest warning.

Providing themselves with torches, the party went by way of the underground passage and then down the several inclines to the level of the city.

Taking the broad avenue directly in front of them, they went straight on without stopping for more than a cursory glance at the buildings they passed, until they reached the large rectangular structure with the two square towers at the further end.

"This must have been the royal palace," said Hal.

They entered several chambers, there being no doors, but found most of them empty and with no evidence as to their former use.

In one they found some tables and benches but nothing else, and in the next a row of stone benches placed around the walls, but no tables.

"These are not benches," said Hal, suddenly. "They are chests," and he pointed to a slab which projected over the edge of one of the supposed benches.

It required the combined strength of four men to raise this slab, and then it was seen that it had in reality covered a chest.

Below it was a receptacle four feet long and two feet wide, filled with square pieces of a yellow metal, evidently gold.

"These must have been coins," said Leon. "They are undoubtedly gold and are valuable for the metal in them alone, while as evidence of a prehistoric people they are estimable."

"Let us see what the other chests contain," said Hal.

The slabs were lifted from several of the chests, which contained silver, gold, copper, and lead in bars and many utensils, the purpose of which could not be determined.

The party visited a dozen rooms on this floor, and then Leon and Hal ascended a broad, winding staircase to the top of one of the great square towers.

The view from the top of the tower, which was surrounded by a stone balustrade, was most magnificent.

The entire city lay at their feet; the hills, the grove, the line of reefs, the calm water within and the tossing sea without, all

forming a wonderful panorama, the beauty of which could not be surpassed.

"It is beautiful," said Leon, "but it is a prison; there is no escape."

As he spoke a distant rumbling was heard and a slight vibration could be felt.

"Great heavens! Look at the mountain behind us!"

"A wreath of smoke! Merciful powers, the volcano has awakened from centuries of sleep!"

The two officers hurried below with all possible speed, finding that their friends had not yet been alarmed, having felt no shocks, nor seen any smoke, having taken the shadows for the pressure of passing clouds coming between them and the sun.

"The volcano has burst forth. We must return to the vessel instantly," said Leon, as he and Hal rushed out upon the terrace, where they found the rest of the party. "There is not a moment to lose if we wish to save our lives."

CHAPTER XV.

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

Down the broad avenue they hurried, and as they ran they could see the shadows growing denser, hear the rumblings of the giant imprisoned under the mountain, feel the earth vibrate under their feet.

"Hasten, hasten!" cried Leon, catching Isabel in his arms and dashing on. "If the sea rushes in we are lost."

When they were within a hundred feet of the base of the cliff, there came a most violent shock, which threw them to the ground.

At the same time there was a terrible sound like a thunder clap, the air seemed filled with dust and flying stones, and in an instant a huge mass broke from the face of the cliff and fell into the valley.

"The path is destroyed!" cried Hal. "There is no way out."

Upon the slope of the mountain there could now be seen a glowing stream making its way slowly but surely down, eating up everything.

A great mass of stone and earth had been broken from the cliff, and the winding stairway to the top was exposed in many places.

Whether retreat had been entirely cut off no one could yet determine, but in any event the position of the explorers was a most precarious one.

In a few minutes the dust cleared away, and the little party who had taken refuge in one of the deserted houses came out upon the avenue.

They waited for several minutes, and felt no further shock, although the stream of lava from the mountain top was still slowly descending.

About half the face of the cliff at the point where the inclined planes led up had fallen away, but the path seemed unobstructed, and Leon at last concluded to make an attempt at getting up. They entered the first tunnel and went up for two or three stages, till they came to a point where two paths were opened.

There they met with obstacles, the way in some places being so narrow that only one person could pass at a time.

The path had fallen away or had been littered with rubbish, so as to render it well-nigh impassable, but by proceeding slowly and with caution they gained step by step, and at last came to the mouth of the secret passage.

This was so choked up that there was no entering, but the arch from which the stone had fallen in their first passage had now been entirely destroyed, and the path to the top was clear, although very narrow.

It was so narrow, in fact, that one was obliged to cling closely to the wall, and make his way along with the utmost caution, as a single false step would have ended in death.

Leon went first, facing the wall, and giving one hand to Isabel, who was followed by Hal, then May, then Paul, and lastly by the others.

One by one they reached the top, till Leon, Hal, the ladies and Paul had gained safety on top of the cliff.

Darke Crenshawe, Derrick and Hodge could easily make their way up, but with old Bill, with his wooden leg, and the Dutch boy, with his superfluous flesh, further ascent was out of the question.

Paul ran off to the shore, hailed those on board the Sprite, and a strong rope was sent on shore.

By means of this the five men still on the path were drawn to the top, and none too soon.

They had barely been rescued when a huge mass of smoke and flame was seen to shoot up from the crater, and a violent trembling was felt.

"To the shore!" cried Leon. "To the shore for your lives!"

The entire party fled in utter terror to the grove, and hardly had they left the cliff before there was another awful shock, which seemed to shake the island to its very foundations.

The cliff fell away to a distance of thirty feet, and huge masses of stone and earth, trees, grass and shrubbery went toppling into the valley.

Upon reaching the shore the sea was seen to be violently agitated, great waves were rushing in over the line of reefs, and the vessel was tossing about like a feather.

She had parted her cable, and seemed in danger of being dashed upon shore, but the sailors on board presently put her head to the wind and got up sufficient sail to steady her.

In a few moments the commotion was over, the waves subsided, and all was calm within the little bay, although the breakers still beat against the reefs, and all the sea was white with foam.

There were no more shocks, but all that day the volcano smoked and threw out fire, and at night it was like a blazing torch, lighting up the city, the island, and the sea for miles.

In the morning, although the volcano was still smoking, it did not appear to be throwing up any great masses of lava, and the city still lay in the valley, as white and as silent as it had lain for ages.

The flood of lava on the mountain side seemed to have been checked for the time, as it had advanced scarcely any during the night.

For a month the volcano smoked on, throwing up ashes and small quantities of lava, the stream on the mountain having evidently flown into some deep gully and filling it, for as yet the city was not disturbed.

"That makes a pretty good torch," said old Bill Capstan, one night, as he sat on deck smoking his pipe, "but——"

What Bill was about to say was never known, for at that moment there came a sound like a thunderclap, and a tongue of fire a hundred feet high was thrown up from the summit of the burning mountain.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

The volcano had again burst forth, and now the destruction of the silent white city in the valley seemed certain.

Masses of seething lava fell in all directions, and a broad, red river of fire rushed down the slope.

From the edge of the cliff Leon and his friends watched the river of lava flow down the mountain side till it reached the city, where it spread from street to street, flowing on unchecked.

The great square building, with its two towers, stood as if in a sea of fire; and then, as the red light was reflected on its white walls, seemed to be bathed in blood.

Suddenly there came an awful explosion, and the two towers were rent asunder and fell with a crash into the fiery river.

Great blocks of stone were hurled into the air and fell upon the roofs of the houses, buildings fell in all directions, marble columns toppled over into the red river, and terrible explosions were heard on all sides.

The white city was now as red as blood, and the work of destruction progressed on every hand.

All that night they watched the awful scene, and in the morning the dreadful work was still going on.

All that day the lava continued to pour from the summit, but at night it suddenly ceased, after one tremendous burst, which sent a mass of fire fully two hundred feet into the air, and only a thin wreath of smoke curled up from the crater.

Days passed and only a cloud rested upon the mountain.

The city was not yet totally destroyed, for here and there could be seen a massive building still standing, as if mocking the ruin and desolation all around it.

Weeks passed, and there were no more fiery rains from the mountain, the summit became bleak and cold, and only that thin wreath of smoke remained as evidence of the internal fires not having yet subsided.

Months rolled on and at last even the smoke disappeared and the volcano was at rest.

A year had passed since Leon had come to this strange land in a nameless sea.

The vessel had been repaired, but they were still prisoners, for the cruel reefs still barred their way, and there was no passage through them to the sea beyond.

They were forced now to live upon the supplies in the hold of the vessel.

One night, in the darkest hours, when the volcano had showed no sign of activity for months, the prisoners on the Sprite were awakened by a terrible booming sound.

Rushing upon deck half-clad, they beheld a bright light in the sky, and saw that the volcanic fires had again burst forth.

Terrible as had been the former exhibition, that which they now beheld was infinitely worse.

The earth shook with frightful violence, while the sea, breaking over the line of reefs, dashed into the bay in great surges.

Then there came a shock worse than all that had preceded it, and a perfect wall of water was seen advancing toward them.

"Cut the cable!" screamed Leon, and Derrick seized a sledge-hammer and smote the great chain holding the anchor.

In an instant the little vessel was lifted high in the air, and seemed about to be dashed upon the shore.

Then there came another shock, and all the water seemed to rush out of the bay.

Over the line of reefs it carried the vessel and well into the ocean, and then, before another wave could dash it back again, all hands flew to their positions. Sail was made, and they dashed off before the wind, leaving the island behind.

"Look!" cried Paul, and they all saw a great white, foaming wall of water rushing towards the island.

They sped away and escaped the wave, but in a few minutes they heard a terrible explosion, and the island was hidden in a cloud of steam.

Finally there came a more deafening sound than any they had heard, and with a mighty burst of sound the mountain seemed to dissolve itself in fire.

For an hour or more they sped on, but at last the wind moderated, the sky lightened, the sun arose, and where the island had been nothing was to be seen but the ever-restless ocean.

They had escaped from the island, but they were still in the dark as to their position on the ocean.

Leon determined to put the vessel on a general northerly course, hoping to eventually run up on the South American coast and thus get his bearings anew.

At length one morning, just at sunrise, they beheld a small rocky island in the distance, and as they approached nearer saw huts and plantations and people walking about on the beach.

Two of the natives presently launched a boat, guided it with great skill through the surf and rapidly approached the vessel, when, to the great surprise of all, one of the men said, in excellent English:

"Ahoy there! Throw us a line. We want to go aboard."

A line was thrown, and the two men, who appeared to be sturdy English sailors, came on board, being regarded with wonder by the men on the *Sprite*, who had only expected to see savages.

"What island is that?" asked Leon.

"That is Pitcairn Island," said one of the men.

"Pitcairn Island?" repeated Leon, for the famous islet was then little known. "I do not remember to have heard of it. Did you discover it? Where is it? How long have you lived here?"

"It is in the Pacific Ocean, a thousand miles from Tahiti. I was born here twenty-four years ago."

"Twenty-four years ago? Were your parents wrecked here on the island?"

The young man then told Leon a most remarkable story, and one that far exceeded the strangeness of his own.

He was the son of a man named Fletcher Christian, one of a number of sailors who had mutinied, seized the ship, put the captain and officers in an open boat, and then had sailed for Tahiti, afterwards going to this little island, destroying the vessel and marrying the Tahitian women they had taken with them.

"I have heard something of this story before," said Leon. "The ship was the *Bounty*, was it not, commanded by Captain Bligh, who was once with Captain Cook?"

"Yes," said the young man, "that was the vessel."

"And are any of the mutineers still alive?"

The young man remained silent, and Leon added:

"You need not be afraid. I am an American and the English are my enemies. It is not likely that I shall betray any of you."

Leon then went on shore and learned the strange history of the Pitcairn islanders.

"Then we were in the Pacific Ocean all the time," muttered Hal, "and we thought we were in the Atlantic. How we must have drifted and been buffeted about!"

From the islanders Leon obtained a chronometer and compass, neither of which were of use to them, but were of great value to the boy captain.

By the aid of the instruments given him by the islanders Leon rounded Cape Horn and made his way north toward home, and although thousands of miles were to be traveled he was undaunted, for now he was no longer lost on a nameless sea, and had everything to look forward to.

CHAPTER XVII

LEON AND HAL IN PRISON.

After a long, weary journey over thousands of miles of ocean, Leon at last sighted land.

He ran into Rio Janeiro to refit and get more men, for now that he was nearing his own country he desired to be as strong as possible in the event of an engagement.

The vessel was anchored in the harbor, and as soon as possible Leon and Hal went ashore, accompanied by Paul, Derrick and Hodge, in order to make all necessary arrangements.

Leon and Hal wore undress uniforms, with short swords at their sides, and might have been taken for officers of almost any European navy, while Paul was dressed simply, so as to attract little attention.

They were crossing the principal public square in the city, when Leon suddenly saw among the crowd a young Frenchman whom he had known abroad a few years before and to whom he was greatly attached.

"Ah, my dear Etienne," he cried, pressing forward. "What lucky chance is it that brings you here? I am delighted to see you."

"Ah! it is the young American, my brave Leon," answered the other, pressing the young captain's hand warmly. "This is indeed a surprise. Your father is with you?"

"No, my father is dead. I am in the service of the American navy, and these are my friends—Lieut. Hurry and young Monsieur Paul——"

"Be careful," whispered the young Frenchman, suddenly lowering his voice. "We must not speak French so near the palace of the king."

"And why?" asked Leon, speaking in English.

"The Emperor Napoleon made war on Portugal, their king came here for safety; all Frenchmen are hated here. They think I am a Spaniard, I am so dark. You speak that language?"

"Yes."

"It is well. I had not thought to warn you, our meeting was so sudden, but perhaps there is no harm done."

Darke Crenshawe was nearer than Hal supposed, was not more than four or five paces behind, in fact, and had seen the meeting between Leon and the young Frenchman.

Leon and Etienne, Hal and Paul, crossed the square, and as they reached the other side Leon asked:

"By the way, Etienne, what is your business in Rio? Have you founded a college or——"

"Oh, no, but I am secretary to the bishop, and am still pursuing——"

"Secretary to the bishop!" cried Hal. "Then in mercy's name, procure us a license that we may get married. We were on the point of it a year ago, when our friends, the English, interfered."

Etienne looked puzzled, and Leon was about to explain, when Paul suddenly said in French:

"There goes the man who I think brought the English down upon us that day, your smiling cousin, captain."

Darke Crenshawe had passed within a few paces of them, and at a sudden opening of the crowd Paul had seen him and had spoken in French that Crenshawe might not understand.

The latter spoke French, although Paul thought otherwise, and he understood perfectly what was said.

"Sh! be careful!" said the Frenchman. "That tongue is barred here."

"So, the brat does suspect, does he?" muttered Darke, as he hurried on. "I must take advantage of this. Once let me get

the bishop's secretary out of the way, and my plan cannot fail of success."

"That is the one I spoke of as wishing to get a good share of Leon's property," said Hal. "He acts most suspiciously at times, and then so openly that no one can doubt his sincerity."

"But this postponed wedding—what about that?"

"I will tell you," said Leon, "and no doubt you can assist us."

They went to a little inn on a quiet, narrow street, and here, as they sat at table and enjoyed a frugal meal, Leon explained the circumstances to which Hal had alluded.

"I can help you," said the young Frenchman. "It is too late now, being after the noon hour, but to-morrow you shall be married. You must dine with me to-night at my quarters in the palace of the bishop, and I will see about the license. You will not fail, all three of you?"

"No," said Leon and Hal together.

"And my brave young friend, Monsieur Paul Dubois, you must come also. You are French, are you not?"

"I am an American, born in the United States," said Paul, proudly. "But you are right, monsieur—I am French. My mother was of Paris, but she is so long dead that—"

"And you will come?" asked Etienne, seeing the tears standing in the boy's dark eyes.

"Yes, monsieur, I shall do myself the honor," answered Paul lightly.

Soon after this they parted in the plaza, and Etienne, forgetting his own caution, bade them a good-by in French, and hurried away.

Hardly had they gone ten paces, when Darke Crenshawe, stepping out from the shadow of a doorway, spoke a few words to an officer standing near.

"Those are the spies of Napoleon; they are the men who would betray your ruler!"

"Never!" said the man, hurrying away.

Leon and his companions had barely reached the narrow street on the other side of the square before they were suddenly confronted by a sergeant and a file of soldiers.

"Senors, you are under arrest!"

"But what means——"

"Not a word, or my men will fire! To the prison!"

The soldiers closed in and surrounded the two officers, but in the confusion the boy slipped away.

In half an hour Leon and Hal found themselves in a closely barred cell, before the door of which paced an armed guard, and the one window of which looked out upon a deep gully, at the bottom of which flowed a foaming mountain torrent.

Just before dark the guard swung open the door and put a jug of sour wine, some bread, and a dish containing some kind of meat stewed with herbs upon the stone bench at one side of the cell, and told them in Portuguese that there was their supper and they might eat it.

An hour passed, and the light of the rising moon was just beginning to penetrate their dungeon, when there was a noise of clanking chains and grating keys, and the great door was swung open, and there entered a man arrayed in priestly garments, accompanied by a boy wearing a long cloak.

He had a small oil lamp with him, and this he placed on the stone bench as the door was closed.

The instant the key was turned the man caught up the lamp, threw back his cowl, and said:

"Hush! I have come to save you from a terrible fate."

The man was Darke Crenshawe.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRAITOR AT WORK.

"You!" said Leon, in great surprise, springing to his feet.

"Yes," said the other, "I have come to help you to escape. I

know that you suspect me of another purpose, cousin, but you wrong me."

"I have procured the means of escape, but you must use the utmost caution. This boy, whom the prison officials sent with me, will try to spy upon us, but fortunately he speaks no English. They would not let me come without him."

"Well, well; what is your plan?" asked Leon, nervously.

"You will ask to have a bed sent in, as the stones are too hard to lie upon. Two or three bundles of straw will be sent in, and, concealed in one, will be a long and strong rope and a file."

"Yes, and then?"

"You can cut through one of the bars and let yourself down by the rope to the bottom of the gully."

"And after that?"

"There is a swift-flowing stream below which runs to the sea. Throw yourself in and let it carry you down. Before long you will meet a boat with some of your men in it."

Hal, who paid little attention to what Darke said, but was watching the boy attentively, now saw the latter slowly remove the cloak from about his face and raise one hand in token of warning.

He was behind Darke and in the shadow, but as he advanced a pace the moonlight fell upon him.

Then his face was revealed, and he formed one word with his lips, making no sound.

The word was full of meaning, and from those lips could not fail to be impressive.

"Beware!"

The boy was Paul Dubois, the young cabin boy of the Sprite.

Hal was astonished and would have betrayed himself, but Paul instantly fell back and began to mumble something in Spanish.

Darke turned quickly and looked at him, but his face was now in shadow and partly concealed by his cloak.

"Time presses," said Darke. "I must get away. One other thing. In case of some of the guards being at the windows, or upon the battlements below, it will be wise to send down a dummy figure of straw first, in case they fire upon you. Then you can follow in greater safety, as they will think you dead."

Paul stepped forward, formed the same word of caution and then mumbled in Spanish:

"The time is up; we were to stay but five minutes."

"Yes, yes," said Darke, in the same tongue, but with a decided accent and hesitatingly, "I am coming." Then in English: "Good-night, cousin; good-night, lieutenant; a pleasant journey to you both. Do not forget my instructions."

Then, taking up his lamp, he went out, followed by Paul, who turned for an instant and formed the word:

"Do not trust him!"

Then he, too, was gone, and the solid oaken door closed with a clash.

Not until the echo of the footsteps outside had died away did either of the friends speak.

"Did you see who was with your cousin?" asked Hal.

"Yes; it was Paul."

"Did you catch what he meant to say?"

"Yes. It was, 'Do not trust him.' How came he with Crenshawe?"

"I do not know. He evidently has some plan of his own on foot. Before that, when you did not see him, he told me to beware. I do not think that Crenshawe knew that it was he."

"Then Paul must have seen Etienne. How comes it that Darke knew of our being arrested? Did you see him in the plaza at that time?"

"No, but I would not trust him. I have never liked the man."

"I think that he wishes to remove you that he may inherit your fortune."

"But how did he get into the prison, and how did Paul manage to be with him?"

"I am as much in the dark as you are; but this I know, that we can trust Paul and there is a doubt about Darke Crenshawe. The boy is our friend, but I am not at all sure about the other."

"You are right; and yet we may have done the man an injustice."

"I do not believe it. However, we can only wait."

An hour later, as they were sitting in the shadow, meditating upon their position, the door was opened.

One of the guards entered, threw down two or three bundles of straw, and said:

"That is for the senors' bed. The stones are hard and cold. Good-night."

When the man was gone and the door was again closed, Hal went to the bundles of straw and opened them.

"Ha! it is just as he said. Here is a long, stout rope," he muttered, "nicely concealed in one of the bundles."

"Nothing else?" asked Leon, who had not moved from the wall.

"Yes," said Hal, after a pause, "here is a file and—why, there are two, and one has a bit of paper wrapped about it. It must be a message."

"Read it," said Leon, briefly.

Hal took the scrap of paper to the window where the light of the moon could fall upon it, unfolded it and read:

"Do not make the attempt to-night. Darke meditates some treachery. What it is I have not learned. Remain quiet till I can communicate with you.—Paul."

"That is certainly to the point," said Leon, "and I think it will be well to follow the boy's advice."

"By all means," said Hal, as he proceeded to tear the paper into the smallest possible pieces.

These he presently threw out of the grated window, watching them fall or float about in the breeze until they had all disappeared.

He then returned to his seat on the bench, and for some time not a word was spoken.

"It is growing very dark," said Hal, at length. "I suppose the moon must have risen too high to shine in here. It seems colder, too."

"We shall not need the moon to sleep by," returned Leon, "but an extra cloak would have been acceptable. Was there nothing of the sort concealed in the straw?"

"I think not," said Hal, arising; "but I will look."

As he passed in front of the grated window he suddenly exclaimed:

"Ha! no wonder it has grown dark and cold. The sky is overcast with clouds and the wind has risen. We are going to have a storm, and a severe one if I mistake not."

Even as he spoke there was a flash of lightning, followed a few moments later by a low, rumbling sound.

"It is still some distance off," muttered Leon.

"Yes, but it seems to——"

He was interrupted by a vivid flash, followed almost instantly by a tremendous peal.

"I thought it was traveling very rapidly," he muttered. "It comes from the sea, I take it, and seems to be heavy."

At that moment there was a flash that lighted up the whole of the cell, accompanied by a deafening crash of thunder.

"The sky is as black as ink, the wind blows keen and cold, the air is damp, and I think we will have rain," said Hal, after a pause.

"Perhaps it will be better to make the attempt, after all," said Leon. "The darkness will aid us."

"But the lightning will betray us."

"Yes, but if it rains the lightning may cease."

Just then a great gust of wind came in at the window, and the patter of rain was heard.

At the same moment the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled again, the storm having evidently increased in violence.

It had come up very suddenly, but it showed no signs of abating, seeming rather to grow worse with each succeeding minute.

The lightning became almost incessant, and the noise of the thunder was fairly deafening, one terrific peal succeeding another in swift succession.

The rain beat in at the window in a perfect flood, and in a few minutes streams of water were running across the floor of the cell toward the door.

"It's a perfect tropical storm," muttered Hal, "but it may not last long. If we only knew we might make the attempt, but I think that perhaps we had better take Paul's advice and wait," and he laid the file which he had taken up in his hand upon the window ledge.

"It is certainly a splendid opportunity," said Leon. "The boy could not have foreseen the storm, nor could Darke. What treachery can he have meditated?"

"Posting men on the battlements and at the bottom of the cliff to fire upon us," said Hal, picking up the file again.

"But the storm will have driven them to shelter by this time, even if they had been posted so early."

Hal's reply was lost in the terrible report which followed.

A blinding flash filled the cell, the air seemed surcharged with electric fluid, and even the solid stone walls seemed to shake with the awful crash that followed.

Hal was thrown to the further side of the room, right against the door, while the tower itself seemed about to fall in pieces.

"Look, look! The bars have been wrenched from their places!" cried Hal. "The stones have fallen away. The tower has been struck by lightning."

In an instant a second bolt entered the place, attracted no doubt by the file which Hal had dropped, or by some jagged remnant of the broken bars.

It was like a ball of living fire, and it sprang straight towards the door where Hal lay upon the stones.

The room was full of smoke and flame in a moment, the very walls seemed about to fall in upon them, and for an instant they were dumb with terror.

Then there was a crash, the stout door was torn from its hinges, and fell shivered and twisted upon the floor of the corridor without, opening a way of escape that they had not dreamed of.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE TRACK.

It was for no cowardly motive that Paul had suddenly decamped at the time of the arrest in the public square.

He could not prevent the arrest, and he could better aid his captain free than if he were made a prisoner.

He quickly made his way to the edge of the crowd, and here he saw Crenshawe, although the latter did not at first observe him.

The man had an evil smile on his face, as if gloating over what had just happened, and Paul was more than confirmed in a suspicion he had formed.

As Darke suddenly discovered him, he sprang forward and said excitedly:

"Oh, Mr. Crenshawe, do you know what has happened? Captain Leon has been arrested as a spy. If we had only had some of our brave fellows here this would never had happened."

"Arrested, say you?" cried Darke, in well-feigned astonishment.

"Yes, and but now. The soldiers are only now leaving the plaza. If I could meet Monsieur Etienne something might yet be done. Will you tell the men what has happened? I must locate the prison so as to be prepared in case we attempt a rescue."

"Yes, that will be a good plan," said Darke; but Paul had gone before he finished.

"I should have included the boy in the capture," he muttered. "The brat may make us trouble. I shall have to pretend to act in concert with him. Perhaps then I can get rid of them all at the same time."

Paul followed the guards until they reached the prison, after which he made himself as well acquainted as was possible in a short time with the surroundings of the place, and then returned to the vessel.

Near the harbor he met Darke, and told him what he had learned.

"We were to meet M. Etienne at six o'clock to dine with him," he said. "He must have influence at court, being the bishop's secretary. I think we ought to see him as soon as possible."

"By all means," said Darke. "Do you know where he lives?"

"At the palace, but I doubt if I can see him there now. I must wait till six o'clock, but in the meantime would you not advise forming a plan to rescue the captain and Lieut. Hurry, in case M. Etienne can do nothing?"

"Yes, by all means. What would you suggest?" asked Darke, eagerly, and with more interest than he had yet shown.

"I can think of nothing as yet," said Paul, guardedly, "but if I can secure an entrance into the prison I may be able to determine upon something."

"How will you do this?"

"By seeing the secretary; but there is yet time for this."

The boy then hurried to the water's edge, procured a boat, and was rowed out to the vessel.

Here he told Isabel and May what had happened, and what plans he had formed, disclosing to them what he had not told to Darke.

"Do not trust that man Crenshawe," he said in conclusion. "Do not believe anything he tells you, unless you get it from me first. I suspect him, but I must keep in with him until I know more."

An hour later he went ashore and went to the little inn where they had all lunched that day.

"The senior secretary has not arrived?" he asked the landlord.

"I do not know. There is someone in the next room."

The lad hurried away to the room mentioned, and was about to put his hand on the latch, when he heard someone within say:

"It will be attended to, senior. The spies will not escape."

"And you can procure my entrance?" asked a voice which Paul at once recognized.

"Beyond a doubt."

"Then all will be well, if you will carry out your part of the game."

"We will be there, senior."

"That is sufficient," muttered Darke. "You know the rest."

"I do."

Paul crept noiselessly away, as he heard the footsteps of those within, and in a few moments from a dark corner of the passage he saw Darke and a soldier of the guard come out of the room and leave the house.

"That man is in league with one of the guards," he muttered. "This is indeed suspicious."

Shortly before six he hurried to Etienne's quarters, and was admitted by the gentleman himself.

In a few minutes he had related all that had happened, and what he suspected.

"I cannot get into the prison at this hour," said the secretary, "but I can send a messenger, and you shall be the one. Contrive, if you can, to be there at the same time as this man Darke. Remain all night, if necessary. You have only to show this ring to be allowed to do as you please. You will be taken for one of the younger brothers, some of whom are nearly always in attendance at the prison to perform various offices, if necessary. I will give you a disguise."

It was not yet dark when Paul arrived at the prison, and was admitted without question.

A few minutes later he saw two men pass through the main corridor, one a jailer, the other a priest, apparently.

There was something in the man's walk that made Paul suspect him, and he followed.

As the two passed under a suspended lamp, the boy saw the face of the supposed priest, and recognized Darke Crenshawe. He followed, and presently the jailer turned and said:

"What does my young brother wish?"

"I am sent to visit the spies and confess them," answered Paul, in a low, altered voice. "You go thither?"

"Yes," and no opposition was made, the guard telling Darke that the boy would have to go with them.

In the cell Paul managed to show his face to Hal for an instant, and to make him a sign of caution.

After leaving the cell, Darke and the guard went to a large circular room on the ground floor, used by visitors to the jail, the guards when not on duty, and by others.

Here Paul sat alone on a bench placed against the wall, and pretended to read from a breviary taken from his pocket.

Crenshawe and the guard presently sat down near the wall some distance off, and began to talk in low tones.

Suddenly a most remarkable natural phenomenon was revealed to the lad.

The walls of the room carried all sounds that were made close to them, right around to the starting point, and by placing an ear to the wall anyone could hear distinctly what was said at the farthest point even if uttered in whispers.

"The rope will be placed in one of the bundles, as I promised them," Paul suddenly heard Darke say, "and also a file, and they will make the attempt."

"Which we will frustrate," said the other. "You will not forget your part?"

"No, the money shall be paid."

"The villain!" thought Paul, for he did not dare to even whisper. "How shall I get word to them?"

Tearing off the margin from one of the leaves of his breviary he wrote a few lines in pencil and folded the scrap around a small thin file which he took from his pocket.

"It is just as well I did not give the lieutenant this when I was there just now," he mused; "and now to contrive to get this into the bundle."

He waited half an hour longer, but heard nothing which could give him a clue to Darke's plans, and at last the man himself and the guard left the room.

Paul waited a few minutes, and then went up to the corridor on the floor where the captain's cell was located, and walked up and down with the sentry, now and then making some natural and commonplace remark.

The man was glad of company, and would have kept Paul with him as long as the boy would have liked to stay.

At last someone approached, bearing a great bundle of straw.

As the man paused before the door of Leon's cell, Paul inserted his file and the note while the guard was unlocking the door.

"I have warned them," he mused, as he hurried away, "and now to learn more of this villain's plans so as to defeat them."

CHAPTER XX.

THE SCOUNDREL UNMASKED.

A storm had suddenly burst with great violence over the prison.

Paul sat in the round chamber downstairs, and was as much surprised as anyone at the sudden coming of the tempest.

Darke and another of the guards whom Paul had not yet seen suddenly entered the room.

In an instant the first man joined them, and they all sat on the bench running around the wall.

"This storm may defeat our plans," said one. "They will not make the attempt while it rages."

"On the contrary," said Darke, "they will think that none will be about, and may attempt it at once. Post your men on the battlements and at the bottom of the ravine and wait. They will send down a dummy of straw. Fire in the air. Then pretend to go away. They will next descend themselves. Then fire, not in the air, but at the spies."

"The villain!" hissed Paul. "At last I——"

A peal of thunder heard even in the most remote dungeon of the prison reverberated through the place at that moment.

"What did you say?" gasped Darke, who had heard that sudden exclamation of Paul's.

"Nothing," said the guard. "Dios! what a peal that was. It must have struck——"

The windows were illuminated as if by the sun, and another terrific peal sounded.

"That one must have struck somewhere hereabouts," cried one of the guards, hurrying out of the room.

Two or three more followed, and then there was heard the most fearful crash of all, and there was a general fear that the old prison would come tumbling about their ears.

"What a crash!" muttered Paul. "It must have struck one of—my God! they are in a tower. Perhaps that has been shattered!"

The faithful fellow hurried up the winding stone stairways, two steps at a bound.

On the upper floor he suddenly met his friend, the sentry.

"Fly, my lad!" he cried. "The tower is old and crumbling. It has already been struck by lightning, and another shock will bring it down."

"I cannot go. I must see those poor men confined in the angle; perhaps they are injured—they may wish to confess," and Paul ran down the corridor like a deer.

He suddenly paused as two figures came out of a cell a few yards ahead.

"Captain!" he cried, springing forward. "You are not hurt? I feared that——"

"No, we are uninjured, but a great breach has been made in the wall of our cell, and the door torn out by the lightning."

"Back with you!" cried the boy. "I have learned the villain's secret. He is to have men posted below—they are there even

now, and they have been instructed to fire upon you when you appear. Remain here. The guards are aroused. Some of them will be here—yes, they are coming."

The boy hid himself under the straw, close to the wall, and Leon and Hal sat down close to the breach in the wall as four or five guards suddenly entered.

"Ha! what is this? An escape? Give the alarm!"

"Your prisons are not proof against the elements, gentlemen," said Leon, quietly, "or else Heaven desires our escape. You see the exit the lightning has made?"

"Even that was not enough," said Hal, "for it tore the door down for us. Heaven has not willed that we remain here."

The superstitious fears of the men were aroused, and they began to think that these prisoners were indeed under the especial protection of Heaven, and that it was wrong to detain them here.

One of the head jailers now appeared and ordered that the prisoners be transferred to another cell.

"We shall do very well where we are," said Leon, "if you will give us another door to keep out intruders."

"What sort of a man is this?" muttered the jailer, "who prefers a cell open to the air to one warm and dry? There must be some other reason. Search the place, men, and see if——"

The storm had been raging without all this time, seeming to gain rather than to lose in violence.

At this moment there came a blinding flash, and the tower seemed about to fall.

The men fell back in great alarm as Paul sprang to his feet.

"Away, the place is doomed!" cried a voice, and jailer and guards fled precipitately as a heavy stone flew out into the corridor.

Paul had thrown this himself, and as he now picked up the rope which Hal had left in one corner, he said:

"There is only one chance of escape, and it is this. Do you go first, captain. They will not fire, even if they are there. Then I will go and draw their fire, and——"

"No, we shall go together," said Leon. "You must not risk your life further!"

"Time presses," said Paul, making one end of the rope fast about a stone, which he first tested to see if it were firm.

He then threw the other out at the breach, and said:

"Quick! make the descent. I am safe here. I have that which protects me, and——"

"Ha! a spy—seize him!" cried a well-known voice, and at that instant Darke Crenshawe and a dozen guards, all bearing torches, appeared at the door of the cell.

"Seize that boy, he is a spy, he has come to deliver the prisoners, he is no novice, he is a spy. Seize him, and put all three in dungeons."

"Not yet, Darke Crenshawe," said Paul. "I know your plans and shall outwit you for all your pains."

Darke and the guards sprang into the room, but in an instant Paul had leaped through the breach in the wall, and was revealed for an instant by a lightning flash.

In another moment he was gone.

"Away with them!" hissed Darke. "To the dungeons with them, and as for this boy, he will not escape."

The guards seized Leon and Hal, and the traitorous Darke sprang to the breach and gazed down into the darkness.

Suddenly a sharp report was heard below.

"Ha! as I thought!" the traitor laughed. "That is the end of him!"

"No, for your men have obeyed your instructions and fired in the air!" cried Leon. "You see that we know your plans, villain."

"Away with them!" thundered Darke, with a look of fiercest hate upon his dark face.

CHAPTER XXI.

A PERILOUS JOURNEY.

Down, down, down amid the storm, clinging to his frail support, went the gallant boy, the thunder sounding in his ears, the lightning blinding him, the rain wetting him to the skin.

Down the rope he slid, now keeping himself from swinging against the rock by a motion of his foot, and again whirling around and around till he managed to stay himself with one hand.

Suddenly, as he was nearly to the bottom, the lightning flashed and revealed a party of men on a battlement below.

Then there was another flash, and a deafening report, the bullets whistling past his head and some striking against the rock.

"Thank Heaven I have escaped that," he murmured, "but a greater danger is to come."

Then he glided rapidly down to the end of the rope and dropped into the water.

He was swept on by the current, the waters striking a chill to his very heart, and for an instant he thought that perhaps after all he would fail, and that his beloved captain would perish.

Then he nerved himself, and as he was carried rapidly forward, thought only of the bright side, and assured himself that success was certain.

On he swept past the frowning heights where stood the prison, past the wooded hills on the opposite bank, on and still on till the stream entered a narrow defile.

He was floating now, for he wished to reserve his strength, and as he lay on his back he could see the dark sky above him, pierced at intervals by the lightning.

Presently all was dark, and although he could hear the thunder he could not see the lightning.

Turning over, he tried to pierce the darkness about him, but could see nothing.

Then he shouted, and echoes sounded on every side.

He was in an underground stream, surrounded by rocky walls, which had echoed the sound of his voice.

The current seemed to be stronger than before, and he guided himself with hands and feet lest he should be dashed against some projection at a sudden turn of the stream.

On and on he was carried, and suddenly, as he threw up one hand, it came in contact with something just above his head.

The roof of the passage was growing lower.

Before he was aware the passage might be entirely filled with water.

As he thought of this a chill came over him, and he struck out bravely, finding that he still had a good supply of strength.

It was not long before what he had feared became a reality.

The ceiling rapidly fell, till at last he was entirely submerged and floating through a sewer-like passage, the sides and top of which he could touch with his hands.

The current was very swift here, but there was no knowing how small the passage might become at last; perhaps was too confined to allow even his slight form to pass through.

Even if this were not the case it might be of so great length that his breath would be exhausted before he reached the end.

He had filled his lungs well with air just before being submerged, but at the most he could not hope to remain without breathing for more than three minutes, and the required journey might occupy much more than that.

It was useless to attempt to return, for it would be impossible to breast the powerful tide that was sweeping him on.

The current still bore him forward, but his strength was giving out, his head seemed ready to burst, and unless the open air were soon reached he would be drowned.

Summoning all his remaining strength, he struck out vigorously and shot forward, suddenly finding himself in the open air with his head above water at the very moment that he was forced to open his mouth and release the breath in his lungs.

It had been a narrow escape.

A few moments only and he would have been strangled.

He now found himself in a broad stream with low hills on either side, revealed occasionally by the lightning which still flashed, but not with the intensity that had formerly characterized it.

The rain descended in blinding sheets, but this mattered little, as he could scarcely see whither he was drifting in any event, and he had already passed through his greatest danger.

He now allowed himself to float with the current, making no motion, but merely striving to reserve his strength, and paying no heed to where he was going.

Before long, however, he found that he was in the harbor, the lights on the ships being plainly visible.

Then he looked about him, and at last, despite the darkness and the rain, made out the *Sprite* lying at anchor not more than three cables' lengths distant.

He swam alongside and hailed the vessel in a low tone.

"What's that?" cried someone on deck.

"It is I, Paul. Throw me a line. I am nearly worn out."

A line was thrown, and the boy was speedily drawn on deck, where he hurriedly told his story and then hastened below to put on some dry clothes.

Derrick made him swallow a mouthful of strong spirits to take away the chill, and although the boy at first objected he finally consented.

Then a party comprising more than half the crew went ashore, headed by Derrick, Hodge, and Paul himself.

"That villain may yet succeed in carrying out his infamous plot," said the boy, "and we must do all we can to prevent it. Let us go at once to the prison and demand that the captain be released."

"I'd like to train the guns of the *Sprite* on it and blow up the whole thing," muttered Derrick.

"But the Brazilians are our friends. We cannot do that," said Paul. "The king knows nothing of this villainy or he would not allow it. It is this Crenshawe who has bribed the prison officials to do his bidding, and no one knows what desperate plan he may attempt. Forward—there is not a moment to lose!"

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

Leon and Paul were thrown into separate dungeons in the lowest vaults of the prison, loaded with chains and left in solitude.

Being separated, they could not cheer each other nor give one another assistance, and the prospect looked black indeed.

Hal was sitting on the floor of his dungeon, where he had been waiting more than two hours for some sign from the enemy, when there was heard the grating of bolts and bars, and the door was thrown open.

Darke Crenshawe entered, followed by an evil-looking fellow bearing a torch.

"Lieut. Hurry," said the villain, "I do not desire your life, and I will see that you go free upon one condition. You will either remain in this country or go to some other, as you please, but you are never to return to the United States, never to communicate with anyone there—in fact, you are to be as one dead. What is your choice, exile or death?"

"Mr. Darke Crenshawe," said Hal, quietly, "you have shown your hand too late, for I know your plans, and I know that they will fail. You seek the fortune of your cousin, and will do anything to obtain it, but your schemes are known and will be thwarted at every turn. It is you who would do well to fly from this place, and not counsel me as to what I should do."

"Bah! You are powerless," laughed Darke. "You see this fellow? At a word he would fall upon and strangle you. It would be called an accident, and would be forgotten in a few hours."

"Beware," said Hal. "I care not if you kill me, but I will never forswear my country and friends at your bidding. I tell you that your race is nearly run, and that you had best look to your own safety. By this time the boy has reached the ship, and——"

"The boy is dead," laughed Darke. "His dead body was found on the rocks below the tower. The soldiers shot him at my command."

"It's a lie!" said Hal. "The men were to fire in the air first and then at us. Those were your commands. Paul has escaped and will bring help to us here."

"He can do nothing now," said Crenshawe, with an evil look. "Leon is dead, and——"

With a cry like that of an enraged wild beast Hal suddenly sprang to his feet, rushed to the end of his chain and struck at the villain with the shackles about his wrists.

"You have killed him? Then die yourself, hound!" he hissed.

Crenshawe fell to the floor bleeding from a cut in his forehead.

He snarled out an order to the jailer, and the man rushed at Hal with a knife in his hand.

The brave young fellow dashed the weapon from the man's grasp and struck him on the head, the fellow dropping his torch and rushing from the dungeon with a curse on his lips.

"Oh, you villain!" cried Hal, as he saw Darke crawl towards the door, the torch still giving light enough to enable him to see this much. "You dare not remove these fetters and meet me in fair combat. I would like nothing better than to run you through the body."

"Enough!" hissed Crenshawe, rising to his feet. "There is no alternative now. You shall die as your captain has died, and my triumph will be complete."

"It is a lie! Leon is not dead!" cried Hal. "You thought to bind me to your will by your falsehoods, but you are as false as Satan, and I would not believe you, though you swore it on the most sacred things. Begone, or I will yet burst these chains and kill you!"

"You will have little time to boast," snarled the villain. "I will soon send those here who will not scruple to do my bidding."

Then the door shut with a clang, the bolts shot into place, and Hal was left alone.

"The villain lies!" he murmured. "Paul is not dead, Leon is not dead. He means to get my promise and then to betray me. He would never let me leave this place alive. I would sooner die than renounce my name and country!"

For an hour he stood there, listening for any sound that

might betray the approach of an enemy, tortured with doubt, hoping the best and yet fearing the worst.

At last he heard footsteps outside, and presently the door was opened.

Four guards appeared, and one of them said in Spanish:

"The time has now come. You are to die with your spy friend."

Hal said nothing, and a man entered the dungeon and removed his shackles.

Then he was led out to a small outer court, where the prison walls towered high above his head, and where the sun never penetrated unless at noonday.

It was in the gray of the morning, the storm had passed, and a few stars could be seen overhead.

Hal was placed against the wall in an angle, and presently Leon was brought out and placed beside him.

"I knew you were still alive!" cried Hal. "That villain could not deceive me! What new plot is this? Surely, we are not to die without a trial—without having one chance for our lives?"

"Wait, my dear Hal," said Leon. "I have not yet given up hope."

Presently a file of men came out through a little door in the solid wall and faced them on the opposite side of the court.

The men were armed with clumsy muskets of an antique pattern.

In a moment two men advanced to pinion and blindfold the prisoners.

"Do you know what you are about to do?" cried Leon, in his own language. "We are Americans!"

"No, you are French," said the man, "the enemies of Portugal. You have conspired to overthrow our government and seize the country."

"It is false!" said Leon, in Spanish. "We are Americans, and if you commit this crime the whole world will cry out against you. Would you let us die without religious consolation? Where is the priest? We are not criminals, that you refuse us the last offices of the church. I demand that a priest be summoned."

The man shook his head, and was about to bind Leon's arms, when the young captain threw him off.

Suddenly darting his hand into the inside pocket of his coat, he drew forth a paper and cried:

"Do you see this? Here is the great seal of the United States. I am an officer in its navy. Dare you commit this crime against an American? I know that you dare not!"

The man seemed to hesitate, and then he hurried away to consult with another standing in the doorway.

Meanwhile the men with the muskets stood like so many statues, seeming utterly indifferent to everything.

They were there simply to obey orders, and questions of nationality or the rights of citizens mean nothing to them.

Suddenly the sound of a cannon was heard.

A moment later Darke Crenshawe came into the court, his face inflamed with passion.

"Not yet?" he cried. "Why this delay? Did you not agree to——"

"The senors are Americans; they claim our protection; we dare not risk the anger of a great nation like the Americans——"

"It is a lie! They are French; they are conspiring to overthrow——"

"But the young senor has his commission, stamped with the seal of the——"

"It is not his; he has stolen it; he is a villain!" cried Crenshawe. "Have you forgotten your word? Act now and an investigation will be too late. The United States are far away;

they are engaged in a war with England; the claims of private citizens will receive but little attention. Remember, I promise you enormous wealth if you——"

"Attention!" cried the other, who seemed to be an officer of the prison.

The men immediately stood upon guard.

"Take aim!"

A dozen muskets were raised to a level, all pointing at the doomed men opposite.

Darke hurried from the place, but as he entered the passage he was suddenly thrown down and trampled over by a dozen men headed by a boy.

"Stop!" cried the boy, springing into the court. "Stop, in the name of the king!"

It was Paul Dubois, the brave young cabin boy of the Sprite.

Behind him were Etienne, two priests, the governor of the prison, Derrick and half a dozen of the men of the gallant Sprite.

"Release these men!" cried the governor. "How dare you order an execution without a trial, without a priest? What right have you to act without orders in my absence, unless in dire emergency?"

"Your excellency, the prisoners are spies of the French; they were in a plot to murder the king and——"

"It is false. They are Americans. You have been deceived, unless, as I suspect, you have lent yourself to the plots of as thorough a villain as ever walked in the hope of gain."

The officer turned pale, and quickly interposed.

"Surely, your excellency would not believe that anything but zeal for our king and country would prompt anything I did?"

"I do not know," returned the governor, "but I intend to discover. You might have precipitated a war with one of the greatest nations in the world. Where is the villain who sought the lives of these young men? I will not let him depart till I learn——"

"He is dead, your excellency," said a guard who now appeared in the court.

"Dead?"

"Yes."

The face of the under officer of the prison assumed a relieved expression.

"But who has dared to take the matter into——"

"Pardon, your excellency, the man has taken his own life."

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

It was indeed true that Darke Crenshawe had taken his own life when his schemes had failed of accomplishment.

Fearing death at the hands of some of the crew of the Sprite, whom he had quickly recognized, or perhaps fearing that the very men he had sought to corrupt would betray him, he had plunged a dagger into his heart, and had ended his wicked life.

They found him in the dungeon that had just been vacated by Leon when they went to search for him.

His hand still grasped the deadly weapon, and his body was still warm, although death had followed swift and sure upon the stroke of the fatal steel.

The body was buried in the prison yard, for Leon laid no claim to it.

Although the man had deeply wronged him in life, and had sought to kill him, his body received a decent burial, and his

private papers were taken care of in case anyone wished to preserve them.

To Paul all praise was given for his prompt action, for on that alone had depended the safety of Captain Leon and Hal.

He had aroused Etienne, the governor had been sent for from a province many miles off, and the royal edict had been secured, granting a trial to the prisoners, and all within a few hours.

"That boy will be a captain, perhaps a commodore one day," said Derrick. "The best of us could not have done so well."

"I did only my duty," said Paul, "and if necessary, would have given my life to save the captain."

"I know it," said Leon, "and I am indeed glad that the necessity did not arise. We had need for lives such as yours, my boy. I hope to see you an admiral one day, for you are worthy of the highest honors that can be given you."

The prisoners were liberated and proceeded at once to the vessel, escorted by a guard of honor.

Isabel embraced Paul and kissed him, even before welcoming Leon on his return, and whispered to him alone:

"Brave young heart, it is not your captain's life alone that you have saved, but mine as well, for I should have died had he perished. I shall bear you in grateful remembrance all my life."

"My dear lady," said Paul, "it was for you I risked all—you as well as our captain. Had I failed I would have killed myself."

The reunion was a joyful one, and the boy captain was not only made happy by being restored to the lady of his choice, but was treated with the greatest honor by the king and court.

That very day the double wedding, so long deferred, was solemnized with the utmost pomp in the great cathedral, the happy brides receiving the regal blessing.

In a few days the Sprite sailed away from Rio, and was given a royal salute by the guns from the harbor and from the Brazilian war vessels lying at anchor.

After a quick voyage the gallant little vessel arrived in American waters, and, finding that the war was not yet over, Leon put himself under orders once more, and did valiant service for his country till peace was declared.

When the war was over and the country was once more at rest, he retired from active life for a time, and lived on a fine estate purchased with the fortune which now descended to him.

He and his wife and children, brave Hal, and devoted Paul, have long since passed away, but their descendants still live, and those of Paul, who died a general in the army, never tire of telling of the stirring deeds enacted during the War of 1812, in which so gallant a part was played by the "Boy Privateer Captain."

THE END.

Read "THE BOYS IN BLUE; or, FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS OF CHERRYVILLE," by Allan Arnold, which will be the next number (547) of "Pluck and Luck."

SPECIAL NOTICE: All back numbers of this weekly except the following are in print: 1 to 5, 7, 8, 10 to 13, 16 to 18, 20, 22, 25, 29 to 31, 34 to 36, 39, 42, 43, 48 to 50, 54, 55, 57, 60, 64, 68, 69, 75, 81, 84 to 86, 89, 94, 100, 109, 116, 119, 124 to 126, 163, 171, 179 to 181, 212, 265. If you cannot obtain the ones you want from any newsdealer, send the price in money or postage stamps by mail to FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 24 UNION SQUARE, New York, and you will receive the copies you order, by return mail.

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THINGS OF INTEREST.

A South Sea Islander, whom an English traveler had brought home with him as a servant, in a local tavern was praising up the British constitution, when one of his hearers said to him: "What do you know about it? You're not an Englishman. You haven't a drop of English blood in your veins." "Don't you be so sure about that," replied the black; "my grandfather helped to eat Captain Cook."

The Declaration of Independence is to be seen no more by the public, according to a writer in "Argonaut," an order having been issued that henceforth the historic manuscript shall be kept under lock and key in a great fire and light proof safe. This decision has been reached as the result of an examination of the document by a committee of the American Academy of Sciences, recently in session in New York, who acted at the instance of Secretary Hay, whose attention had been called to the sad state of the famous document. Most of the text of the Declaration is still legible, but only one or two signatures can be made out. There is only a trace of the autograph of John Hancock, the first to sign. The document from time to time will be photographed in order to measure as nearly as possible the result of the protective steps.

The anniversary of the time-honored Gooseberry Fair at Tollesbury, England, took place the other day, and a feature of the survival has always been the baking of huge gooseberry pies. The object was to give a welcome home to fathers and brothers who have been away on racing or pleasure yachts or fishing, and each family used to prepare a huge pie for its home-coming seafarers in specially large dishes. There have been Tollesbury pies that held as much as a peck or half a peck of fruit, and tradition even relates that one pie was so large that the local baker had to remove one or two bricks to get it into his oven.

A writer in a local paper has this to say of a hail storm: "With the breaking of the day I went outside. The country was unrecognizable. The land and the scenery which I had known for years was entirely altered. The very hills, piled high with white hailstones, were a different shape and torrents of muddy water poured down from all sides. And when the red sun rose into a clear, bright sky the scene of ruin and desolation was awful to look at. Buildings had been hurled to the ground and were nothing more than hills of hailstones. A large dam I had spent two years in making had been completely swept away. In another dam, which had remained unbroken, the hailstones had accumulated and piled themselves up over twenty feet in height! There was not a sign of water in this huge dam, just a huge pile of frozen hailstones!"

For many months a big well-drilling machine had been bor-

ing into the dry ground of the Black Hills region of South Dakota alongside the track of the Burlington Railroad at Edgemont. Down went the drill, until the native onlookers wondered whether the railroad company had fixed no limit to the bore, and was simply "going it blind," indefinitely. The company's intention was very definite indeed. Its officials had been informed by a geologist of the United States Geological Survey that a good supply of water would be found in a certain stratum of rock that lay at a depth of about 3,000 feet. This geologist had made a study of the surface outcrops of the rocks of the region, and had based his prediction on that study. And, having faith in the prophecy, the company determined to drill to that depth. It was not necessary, however, to bore quite to the depth of 3,000 feet, for when the drill had gone down 2,980 feet water gushed out at the rate of 350 gallons a minute, and the faith reposed in the judgment of the geologist was justified. This water supply fills a need which is so urgent that if anything should happen to destroy this well the railroad company would not hesitate to bore its counterpart.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

"Have you a college diploma?" "No; but I have several mining-stock certificates that I might frame and hang up as evidence that I have been through the school of experience."

New Curate—How's your wife, Jabez? Jabez—'Er's very doubtful, measter. 'Er doubts as 'er won't get better, and Oi doubts as 'er wull.

"I wonder why Janie Green decided to marry young Anstruthers?" "Well, nobody else had asked her, and it was almost June."

Tom—When are you going to wed your pretty fiancée? Dick (gloomily)—Indeed, I do not know. Tom—But the report is gaining currency. Dick—Yes, but I am not gaining currency. That is just the trouble.

Cautious Customer—But if he is a young horse, why do his knees bend so? Dealer—Well, sir, to tell the 'onest truth, the poor animal 'as bin living in a stable as was too low for 'im, and 'e's 'ad to stoop.

Sachs (to friend in restaurant)—Well, and how's business? Friend—Splendid, splendid! Why, I can't even get my meals at the right time. Just see what I'm eating now. It's my breakfast of yesterday.

Magistrate—It's very disgraceful that you should beat your wife. Prisoner—Well, your honor, she aggravated me by keepin' on sayin' she'd 'ave me hup afore that bald-headed hold humbug, meanin' yer honor. Magistrate—You're discharged.

"Johnny, here is another note from your teacher. He says I might as well take you out of school. You are quite hopeless." "It ain't so, mamma. I hope to be big enough some day to lam the everlastin' daylights out of him!"

"Charles," said young Mrs. Torkins, "a man brought this blank from the assessor's office. He wants us to state just how much we are worth." "What did you tell him?" "I told him to wait till after the races were over. Then we wouldn't have to pay taxes on so much."

There was an old man who was charged with illicit distilling and was brought up before the court. The judge, who was a witty fellow, asked the prisoner what was his Christian name. The prisoner replied, "Joshua," and the judge answered: "Are you the man that made the sun shine?" And the prisoner replied: "No, sir, your honor. I'm the one that made the moonshine."

The Mystery of the Deep

By ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG.

The incident I am about to relate remained unchronicled at the time.

And, by the way, let me add that many of the more startling phenomena witnessed by mariners never find record, save in the log books of the vessels to which the spectators are attached.

It was in 1841.

I was sixteen years old, and belonged to the ship *Luminary*, cruising for right whales in the South Pacific.

We were away down in latitude sixty-three, having followed the whales southward with extremely good luck, although with constant danger from bodies of ice, which were drifting up from the Antarctic circle, when we fell in with the *North America*.

And her captain, Grinnell, bringing with him his mate and two boats' crews, came on board of us to see Captain Brice, our commander.

Of course a good chat was had among officers and hands.

They informed us of a singular circumstance, which only a few days before had occurred in connection with themselves.

Right in the midst of a school of whales, they had encountered an enormous serpent.

It had approached close to them, lifting its scaly head high above the waves.

And while rushing through the water had the appearance of an immense chain of casks, drawn along with great velocity by some submerged steam tug.

It was bigger than the mainmast, they said, and twice the length of the ship.

It was embarrassing to deny, to a person's face, the existence of a thing he assures us that he has seen.

But sailors are not over nice in this particular.

I have heard one tell a shipmate that he would try to believe enough of his story to oblige him.

Thus it may well be imagined that no attempt was made to disguise the incredulity with which the account of the *North America's* crew was received in our fore-castle.

Our chaps evidently thought that there might be some foundation of fact for the story, but they were not prepared to accept all its embellishments.

They admitted that the snake might have been as large as the mizzen topmast, but further than this their marine courtesy would not go.

It was desirable to know what the *North America's* captain would have to say on the subject.

We soon found out that Captain Grinnell corroborated the story of his men, and had related the extraordinary yarn to Captain Brice.

While his mate was no less positive in the same direction.

Our hands therefore concluded that the *North America's* crew had seen something remarkable.

For some days the great sea serpent formed the chief theme of conversation on board the *Luminary*, and all that any of the crew had ever heard or read concerning the species of ocean monster to which the individual in question must belong, was brought up afresh and related with new interest.

The most obstinate doubter in this case was old Bill Stevens, who headed the third mate's boat.

"It was only two or three whales close together, turning flukes," he said, "or a string of porpoises tumbling along on the ridge of a sea. There's no snakes here."

The morning of the third day after falling in with our fellow-whaleman was one of the finest that I ever witnessed in so cold a region.

But as the sun rose, after a short night of only four hours, it showed the *Luminary's* crew that it was not beauty alone, but peril also, which surrounded them.

To the northward of us, stretching along our course as far as we could see, rose a great turreted wall, that gleamed with innumerable hues.

While to the south the sea had the appearance of bearing an immense and shining flotilla, compared with which the vast Spanish Armada would sink into contempt.

Astern, or nearly so, as if soon to close up the gap through which we had passed, was a tall berg, that looked as if broken from the main body, and swinging around like a ship from a pier head.

Right ahead, however, between the two main lines, which were some six miles apart, the sea was open.

And Captain Brice ordered all sail to be made on the *Luminary*, in order to get through this ice-formed strait as soon as possible.

And thus the two ships stood on.

We soon perceived that the line of ice on each hand became broken and further away, no longer stretching directly to the west, but falling off to northwest and southwest; while a distant turret here and there showed itself ahead.

It seemed as if we had run into a little temporary sea, surrounded with moving shores.

Captain Brice felt great anxiety as to whether our way upon the opposite side of the gigantic trap into which we had entered might not be completely barred.

Over three lookouts were aloft, but they were more intent upon ice than whales.

Indeed I do not think that any person on board remembered that the *Luminary* was a whaler at all, until suddenly there came from the main topgallant cross-trees the old familiar cry:

"There she blows!"

The call was echoed from fore and mizzen, till all the ship rang.

The place was alive with whales, and everywhere they were blowing, breaching, or turning flukes.

Three big fellows came up within half a mile of the *North America* and we saw her boats go splashing into the water before our own were down.

Soon, however, we were off from our ship's side—four boats' crew of us—and pulling with springing oars for another division of the large school.

A most exciting day's work we had of it, getting two boats stove, which were replaced by spare ones, and having the satisfaction of seeing at night seven dead whales lying around the vessel—nearly, or quite enough, to complete our complement of oil.

But, in the meantime, one of the boat's crews had been startled by seeing something in the water close to them, which, they said, appeared to roll over like a hoop, with only the upper portion visible.

Old Bill Stevens growled as the circumstance was discussed, and said he guessed there was a snake's nest somewhere under the ice.

"A snake," said he, "is a warm weather bird. He would be very likely to lay and hatch here."

Still, the hands didn't like the idea of that submarine hoop—even those of them who had not seen it.

Next morning we seemed completely shut in by the ice, the comparatively clear space in which we were being circular, and not more than ten miles in diameter, with here and there a loose, glittering island of an acre or two, looking as if it might easily tumble over.

Not a breath of air was stirring, and the long, low swells looked like molten glass.

The position was one of great danger.

We were imprisoned within walls which might at any moment close upon us, crushing the ship to atoms.

And even should this not happen, there could still be no chance for release until the breaking of the great ice ring.

Nevertheless it was determined to proceed with cutting in our catch of the previous day, just as if we were not prisoners.

And as two large whales were in the meantime raised, a mile from us, the captain, in order to be sure of having enough to fill, ordered the third and fourth mates to lower for one of them, while he himself, and the greater part of the crew, should remain on board.

The two whales were turning flukes and breaching among some detached masses of ice.

I was with the fourth officer.

The third mate was close abreast of us, and both boats were pulling for the same animal, when up went its tail, and it disappeared, just where the shadow of a tall berg, near which it was, fell deep and still in the water.

We pulled along to the spot where it seemed likely that he would breach, and then all hands lay on their oars, waiting for the huge black shape to shoot above the surface.

In such high latitudes the ocean depths have a clearness of which those who have never sailed beyond the temperate zone have no conception.

And now, while looking down from the gunwhales of the two boats, with no wind to break the mirror that rolled in never-resting swells, the eyes of the sailors penetrated the awful home of stillness fathoms and fathoms below.

Bill Stevens was at his place in the bow of the third mate's boat.

"Hist!" he said at length; "he's coming! He's rising with a slant, and he'll breach right ahead of us. I'll take him as he shoots out of water!"

The old sailor gathered his iron and braced his right foot. Then peered downward.

But this time he started back with a wild, frightened countenance.

"Powers of pigiron!" he cried, "what's that with him? Stern all! stern all!"

With a springing sweep of the oars, the third mate's boat was sent stern foremost for a number of fathoms.

While looking down from the side of our own boat we saw some immense shape, like that of a monstrous snake, gliding along, shadowy and indistinct, with the tail directly beneath us, and the head lost to view somewhere near the coming whale.

The latter now breached high out of water, then struck heavily right and left, and up and down, with its flukes, and finally started off at tremendous speed.

As it did so there came to the surface what seemed the top of an enormous wheel, without spoke or belt, which rolled heavily over and was gone.

But the reader may judge something of the awe with which we beheld the sea monster, in returning to its shadowy depths, pass slowly under our boat.

Its incredible length appalling us all the more from the vagueness given to the object by the dark and solemn deep.

By this time the second whale had also started off.

And the captain, seeing that we were unsuccessful, and having finally concluded that he had already oil enough to fill the ship, set signal for our return.

Busy enough were all hands—cutting in, boiling out, and stowing down—until finally the Luminary had all her casks full, with something to spare, and it remained only for us to escape from her ice-locked berth.

The North America meanwhile took fifteen whales, after which none remained in this singular pen.

But at length, while boiling out at night about two miles from us, she caught on fire.

Our four boats were instantly in the water and pulling for her.

But flames on board a whaleman, when once started, spread with fearful rapidity, and before we reached her the entire crew of our unfortunate consort had been driven into their boats.

The fire had seized upon the oil in the two great kettles and upon a pile of blubber near them.

Thence it ran fore and aft the deck, and leaped into the rigging.

There was at the time a sharp breeze, and the swell heaving under the ice had begun to separate the surrounding masses from each other.

The ship was not far from some of these, and in the glare of the flames they looked like pyramids of red glass, dazzling one's eyes with their glow.

For miles away the ocean grew crimson, in the light of the burning ship.

There were now eight boats near her, containing her own men and ours, and we were gazing hopelessly at the blaze, that seemed to scorch the clouds, when all hands were horror-struck by a gigantic apparition that shot out of the water, close to the vessel's side.

The ghastly head, some twelve feet in length, supported by a scaly and shining neck, twenty-five feet long, kept shifting quickly from side to side, and glaring about as if in astonishment and alarm.

Not a soul of us stirred.

We all sat speechless and rigid, like frozen men.

Soon a tail, full two hundred feet from the head, delivered a sharp whipping angry blow upon the water.

The whole length of the body between the two extremities rose up to view—a most hideous long black mass, and next, the whole horrible monster was in rapid motion, making the waves foam, with its terrible speed.

A dozen times it circled around the ship, as if fascinated by the prodigious pillar of flame, then darted beneath the surface like an arrow.

"Spring to your oars, men!" cried both commanders in a breath.

And we were off for the Luminary, every one of the eight boats carrying a white bone in its mouth, as the marine expression is, and old Bill Stevens breaking his oar short off, with the frantic strength given him by his unspeakable fright.

At intervals, after reaching our ship, we could perceive some living creature in the water near the consuming vessel, and doubted not that her destruction had still one horrible spectator.

To the great serpent there was evidently a witchery in the sight of fire, which caused him again and again to revisit the scene, after having dived below.

We were glad when the conflagration was over, and only oil casks and half burned pieces of wood lay drifting about on the waves.

Next morning the ice had so broken up that the Luminary made her way out of it, and before night was far to the northward, standing with a fresh southerly wind for Akarao Bay, in New Zealand, where, in about one week, we safely arrived, and shortly afterwards took our departure thence for home.

Bill Stevens had no fault to find with snake stories, and he said that an account of what we had seen ought to be put in the papers; but somehow it was allowed to pass without that mark of consideration, though the bulkhead of the Luminary's fore-castle bore testimony to more than one rude effort to perpetrate the scene with pencil or jackknife.

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